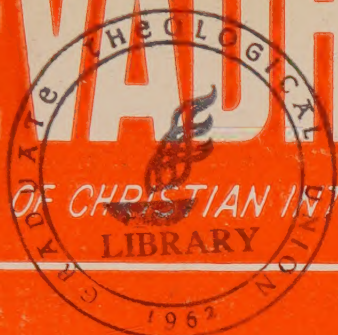


JEEVADHARA

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A JOURNAL OF CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATION

HISTORY, MYTH, THEOLOGY

FOREWORD

by the General Editor

EDITORIAL

MYTH, HISTORY AND COSMOS

Francis X. D'Sa

THE COSMOTHEANDRIC INTUITION

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PRAYING AND PROCESS-THINKING

Herman-Emiel Mertens

STATEMENT

OF THE INDIAN THEOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

January 1984

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JEEVADHARA

The Problem of Man

HISTORY, MYTH, THEOLOGY

Editor

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Foreword

Jeevadhara is entering the fourteenth year of its publication with a new look and a renewed hope. With a printing press in its premises, it hopes to come out every month on time and it will all the more try to fulfil the aspirations summed up in its title, making it a 'Life-Current' - the current of the living water that flows from God into men's lives.

Jeevadhara has been declared a Monthly for postal purposes and is published every month alternately in English and Malayalam of which the one will no more be the edition of the other. Each issue has a separate editor or two and a sectional board of editors; each will have its own theme. It is therefore, certainly very desirable that those who know the two languages should subscribe to both.

We are particularly happy to publish in this issue the Statement of the Indian Theological Association (ITA) at its annual meeting on October 21-23, 1983 at St. Charles Seminary, Nagpur. Most of its contents have already appeared in *Jeevadhara*. It is a bold and significant statement which, we hope, all concerned will take seriously. It is a sign that the ITA which started in 1976 under the auspices of *Jeevadhara* has come of age and has already assumed an important place and role in the life of the Indian Church. Theologians are becoming more and more aware of their responsibility. They have gone far ahead of the role condescendingly assigned to them by Pope Pius XII in his encyclical *Humani Generis*: Take up the doctrinal propositions pronounced by the Magisterium and find support for them from Scripture and Revelation.

When Bishops, the pastors of the people, are becoming more and more engrossed in the day to day administration of the institutional structures of the Church, not rarely falling victims to the corrupting influence of the power they wield, the prophetic voice of the theologian who is committed to the study of the word of God and its relevance to the times, with a certain academic detachment, should ring out loud and clear. As frankly stated at the beginning of the document, theologians have often in the past reduced themselves to a "servile conformity to traditional interpretation" in order to avoid "the displeasure of the Church establishment" (no. 3).

The Statement points to the real problem in the Church today: "The traditional structures and institutions that gave the Church a certain stability and strength in the past have themselves become today its problems" (no. 32). "A great part of the responsibility for these problems should be placed on those in authority who guide the destinies of the ecclesial community" (no. 10). The implication is that the ecclesial authorities are still inward oriented for the preservation of the institutional structures and are oblivious of the development of theology which has become more outward oriented and deeply involved in the actual concerns of today. So conflicts arise. A few specific instances mentioned in the statement (no. 1) disclose the problem: Fr. Jacob of Belgaum, for one, elected to Karnataka Legislative Assembly asks: Can I in conscience limit my work as a priest to celebrating Mass and administering sacraments to the fifteen Catholic families in my parish and ignore the economic, social, political and spiritual concerns of the one hundred and twenty villages, the vast majority of whom recognise me as their leader? His Bishop is adamant in his old line thinking: Yes, you must. You are a soldier in the army of which I am the Captain and you have to act blindly in obedience to my orders.

Ours is an age renowned for dialogue. It is the extreme need of the hour. Dialogue among churches, dialogue among religions is already in vogue. But in the Indian

Church, I mean especially the Catholic, it is conspicuous by its absense among bishops and priests, pastors and theologians, priests and laity.

It is seven years since the ITA started. Its membership is past hundred. Very serious questions concerning Church and society have been discussed at its annual meetings. In all these years, no one of our bishops, except Archbishop Leobard D'Souza, has cared to attend the different sessions of a meeting. Most of the bishops seem to think that they can run the Church without taking into account any development in theology or in the interpretation of the Scriptures.

We hope the bishops will patiently and carefully study the Statement, take the whole Church into confidence: theologians and priests and laity, and with the cooperation of all, try to solve the problems of the Church and society, discussed therein.

Joseph Constantine Manalel
(Founder, I.T.A.)

Church, I mean especially the Episcopal, is a community by its nature among those who believe in the Christian religion, and who are called to live by its principles.

It is never good to have a Church which is not a Church, but a mere organization. Very serious the idea of a Church and society have been discussed at its annual meeting in all these years, and one of our bishops, the late Archbishop and the late Bishop, have been the different sections of a meeting. Most of the bishops seem to think that they can have the Church without being into another way of development in the light of the present situation of the Church.

We hope the Church will continue to be a Church, and not a mere organization. We study the statement that the whole Church and society have been discussed at its annual meeting in all these years, and one of our bishops, the late Archbishop and the late Bishop, have been the different sections of a meeting. Most of the bishops seem to think that they can have the Church without being into another way of development in the light of the present situation of the Church.

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Editorial

In the previous issue of *Jeevadhara* on the Problem of Man (No. 73), we have discussed history and its various models in relation to Man. The present issue is also dedicated to the same domain of thought relating it further to myth and theology. It is said that Man is a being with history. Man is also a mythical being. If history reveals Man's transcendence on the horizontal plane across time, myth points to his transcendence on the vertical plane, beyond time. As theology is more closely related to the transcendence of Man, it has certainly a mythical aspect.

However, there is no dichotomy between myth and history. History is rooted in myth. This is what D'Sa attempts to elucidate as he confronts the history-consciousness of the West with the myth-consciousness of the East. These are two world-views, the one historical and the other cosmic, the former concentrating on change *qua* 'event' and the latter looking at change *qua* 'happening'. The contention of D'Sa, therefore, is that the historical and the cosmic world-views are each merely a view, not a vision, and that only the two together like the two eyes of the *Puruṣa*, will be capable of producing a vision, a depth-vision.

R. Panikkar presents a wholistic intuition of reality, where the "entire reality counts, matter as much as spirit, goodness as much as evil, science as much as mysticism, the soul as much as matter". According to this cosmotheandric intuition, the divine, the human and the earthly are the three irreducible dimensions, the three-fold core, which constitute the real. Panikkar proposes this intuition as the "emerging religious consciousness of our times" and the "undimmed hope of an increasing number of people".

K. Luke's article deals more directly with the origin and significance of mythical language. Man's experience

of the numinous as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans* is pointed out as the source of his thought ranging from myth to the most abstract forms of the philosophy of religion and theology. Thus, on the one hand, theological thinking has a mythical dimension which puts a serious limitation on the expression of religious truths. Failure to realize this has been responsible for so much of heresy-hunting in the past. On the other hand, demythologization in theology is absurd, because the language of myth, as it is evocative, is best suited to express religious truths.

In the article, "Praying and Process thinking", Mertens looks at prayer from the point of view of a world-view which is comparable to the cosmotheandric intuition of Panikkar. Accordingly, the world is an organic whole; there is no strict antithesis between mind and matter. God is not the unmoved mover, but the highest creativity and the highest relativity, and the deepest ground of novelty and continuity. In such a perspective of reality, prayer is becoming conscious of one's relation to God and assenting to it thankfully and hopefully; it is the expression of one's longing for the growth of this interrelatedness, for the perfect unity in which every one's freedom can be fully developed.

Man, though he lives in history and time, has his roots beyond them relating him to reality at large including God. To quote Panikkar: "... at the bottom of Man's self-understanding there is a need for the infinite and the non-understandable, and at the very heart of the divine there is an urge for time, space and Man".

* * * * *

This issue of *Jeevadhara* was planned and the articles herein were collected by Abraham Kóothottil who has been the editor of this section from 1980. The editorial board owe him their deep-felt gratitude and wish him all the best.

Myth, History and Cosmos

1. The serpent and the rope

Imagine you are returning home late at night and it is pitch dark. Your companion turns towards the front door and you decide to enter through the back door. It so happens that the lights are not working and in the dark each of you searches for the lock and the key. At the very moment you both feel something under your feet and with a terrified cry you run away. The fracas awakes the neighbours and they come to your help with torches and oil-lamps. Then you make two discoveries: one, near the back door is a ferocious snake and two, in the front however there is merely a rope.

Analyse now your behaviour. You and your companion reacted in a similar fashion though the *objective* causes were totally different. The cause of these reactions was not just what was under your feet but also what you *thought* was under them. More precisely: you *felt* something under your feet and you *thought* it was a snake. Accordingly the cause of your reaction (predictable under the circumstances) was both what was under your feet and what you thought was under them

Our spontaneous behaviour is guided by not merely what is 'outside' us but also and much more by our *beliefs* about what is outside.¹ Admittedly our example is not very

1. By beliefs I mean those fundamental pre-reflexive attitudes which influence the choice of my life-style and shape the thematic articulation of my values and religious statements. When primary beliefs get verbalized we have our everyday beliefs (in the secondary meaning). If we take the now somewhat prevalent terminology the Mythos, or the horizon of understanding is the total view through which one perceives the world. The actual viewing is primary belief (or Faith) which is really a response to the Mythos. Secondary beliefs are articulations of this response. See R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics* (Paulist Press: New York / Ramsey / Toronto) 1979, *passim*, esp. 4ff.

profound but still it reveals the causal complexity of our behaviour and the *subjective* factor that plays the leading role.

2. Fact and interpretation

The world-view (or the horizon of our understanding) is *always* a major component of our understanding of ourselves in the world. There is no neutral fact that impinges on our consciousness which we then baptize with the formula of our interpretation. Fact and interpretation are one event. To speak of fact and of interpretation is really to speak in terms of abstraction. We do not have fact apart from interpretation. What we have is one event in which we *distinguish* fact and interpretation².

The common illusion is that we see things as they are and *then* we begin to interpret. To make matters worse we take examples of words and their meanings: apples, trees, men etc. These seem to have their own fixed (=not more, not less) meanings, which we start interpreting according to our prejudices and predilections, like first taking hydrogen and oxygen and then combining them appropriately in order to produce water.

The natural process is just the opposite. Our experience first is of water which we later (through thousands of years of hypothesis and experiment) discover to be made up of H₂O. Similarly what we experience we articulate in sentences first. Our articulation of sentences contains *words* which we abstract and then begin to study separately. Hence apples, trees, men etc. and their meanings are abstractions *from* articulated sentences. In real life, we do not go searching for words to build sentences. It is our knowing that expresses itself sentences³. But our knowing is such that *seeing is interpreting* and in a more general way, experiencing is interpreting. It is true that the *articulation* of such an interpretation comes later

2. R. Panikkar. *Op. cit.* p. 98-99

3. In this connection see P. Ricoeur's "Language as Discourse" in his *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Texas, Christian University Press 1976) esp. p.7

but it is equally true that the articulation is merely the flowering of what was already blossoming before.

It is because we begin with false assumptions that we find it difficult to accept the integral nature of fact and interpretation. Our discussions are a number of steps removed from the order of experience. We have first to become aware of the distance of the subject-matter of our discussion from the order of experience. Then, even if we discuss abstract words we should be aware that we are discussing abstract words, not facts! What we have to begin with are our articulated sentences. It is in them that we find an integration of fact and interpretation.⁴

Suppose we come back to our introductory example of the serpent and the rope. Our culture, in spite of all its reverence for life and worship of snakes, has been successful in instilling in us an irrational fear of snakes. The moment we feel some movement under our feet (especially in the dark) our beliefs about snakes get activated almost instantaneously. But suppose we were brought up in another culture where snakes played a different function and so have another meaning our beliefs about snakes would then be different and so would our behaviour too.

The nature of our beliefs, and consequently of our behaviour depends on the horizon of our understanding. It is the total view we have of the world that determines our experience of individual things and persons. This horizon of understanding, this total view, is not a thing that we can manipulate at will. First of all, it is a heritage that is given us by our surroundings. We suck it with our mother's milk and breathe it in with the air. The things that are done and the way things are done, begin to shape this total view of the world. Only when we start reflecting do we discover a pattern in our behaviour and our beliefs. But even then the total view is never completely visible or thematically known to us. Like the ice-berg only part of it is manifest. From such a manifestation we

4. See footnote 2 of this article.

conclude to the total view, to the horizon of our understanding (=Mythos)⁵.

Secondly, this Mythos is not static. It keeps on ever changing and widening as it comes in contact with similar or confronts strange happenings. The mixture of the old and the new, the familiar and the strange introduces a change in the chemistry of our understanding. Depending on the nature of our response our prejudices get further deepened or perhaps weakened or are sometimes even eliminated. On this depends our ability or otherwise to understand another (another's) point of view⁶.

Thirdly, a conscious but gradual and indirect change can be introduced in the length and breadth of our horizon of understanding by a determined effort to eliminate prejudices, to open ourselves to other views and world-views and to appreciate ways of conduct different from our own⁷.

Since *all* conscious experience enters through the door of consciousness, we appropriate these experiences according to the light shed on them by the sun of our understanding. There is therefore no experience that is not enlightened by this sun or silhouetted against the horizon of our understanding.

In this sense all our knowing is *subjective* not *subjectivistic*. That is, it occurs in the realm of the conscious which is not the same as saying that it is in the realm of the subjectivistic and the phantastic. Our access to reality is that of subjectivity, consciousness. And though our language might lead us into the blind alley of a naive realistic epistemology, it is important to remember that subjectivity and reality form *one continuous whole*. Subjectivity is grounded in reality and reality is conscious of itself through subjectivity. To speak of subjectivity and reality is to create

5. R. Panikkar. *Op. cit.* p.4

6. Cfr. H-G. Gadamer. *Wahrheit und Methode* (Tubingen 19754). 289f. Also E. Coreth' *Grundfragen der Hermeneutik* (Herder: Freiburg / Basel /Wien 1969), 131ff.

7. See Panikkar's "Faith and Belief: A Multireligious Experience" in his *The Intrareligious Dialogue* (Paulist Press: New York / Ramsey 1978) and especially his oft-quoted *bon mot*. p.3.

the impression that they are two unconnected and unrelated states. Subjectivity is reality conscious of itself, reality coming into its own; it is the current which switches on the bulb of reality.

When this light is on we know *that* things are and *what* things are. Only in the brightness of this light do we know that things exist. The *truth* of things is made known to us through the eyes of consciousness.

Such a subjectivity is not an abstract concept. It is the concrete way in which not merely an individual but a whole group of people who share in a community of common beliefs, experience. It is these beliefs which in a combined way point to the world-view in which they have their roots.

3. Beliefs and world-view

Beliefs are, to change the metaphor, the windows to and of a world-view. They are windows to a world-view because it is through them that we get a glimpse of what a world-view is. They are windows of a world-view because through them a world-view comes in contact with the 'out-side' world and other beliefs. Through these beliefs one comes to know the world. But since beliefs are not pictures of the outside world they cannot do justice to the exigencies of the outside world in every way. Hence they get corrected, complemented, adjusted, etc. This happens in the following way. Suppose, my world-view has nurtured me in the belief that only my religion is true and that the other religions are merely a natural aspiration towards the true religion. I go round preaching my religion. I discover that there are others with religions different from mine who hold the same, if not similar, views about their religions. They too believe that their religion is the true one and that the rest of the religions are merely natural yearnings towards the true religion. And what is more, I discover that whatever reason I put forward to support my claims is also given by others. I have therefore no reason to believe that I alone am right and that all the rest are wrong. All the reasons I can muster in support of my

view, I realize, can be brought up in support of the others' claims too. In such a situation, my belief has to be made more precise in a way that it can be shown to be true. Whatever the outcome of this confrontation of beliefs, my belief will change: either it will get more confirmed and insist on its truth and on the falsity of the others' claims or it will try to find a different belief scheme in which the truth-claims of others are given a place which does justice to their claims. As we said, whatever the outcome, my belief will be affected.

Since beliefs are the windows to and of a world-view, it follows that all our beliefs will be of a piece.⁸ All these primary beliefs which are *operative* at the level of (at least) every conscious act shape the perspective of the experiencing person. The same is to be said of the group of persons sharing a similar horizon of understanding. It is this circumstance that explains why one culture produces a perspective called 'science' and why another brings forth a different perspective called *āyurveda*, why one speaks of the world of history and another of the world of *māyā*, why one proclaims a personal God and another a transpersonal Brahman⁹.

These primary beliefs, (primary because it is from them and through them all other beliefs pass through to the stage of articulation), these primary beliefs are all-pervasive in a person's life. He is born in them, moves in them and it is in them that he has his being. A person's emotional, social, political, religious, historical perspectives are formed and informed by them. Thus his total world-view is shaped by them.

From what has been said till now it should be obvious that a naive realistic epistemology that is built on the distinction of the objective world outside and the subjective

8. Both the 'in-coming' and 'out-going' exchanges take place through beliefs.

9. Science as we have it today is surely a part of western civilization. The world-view presupposed by it is different from that presupposed by *āyurveda*. In a general way, one could say that the former begins with the particular and proceeds to the general just the opposite of the latter.

world inside is totally inadequate to account for the reality of a world-view¹⁰. What is called for is an epistemology that helps build up a hermeneutic that does justice to the nature of our knowing and the truth-claims of our beliefs¹¹.

4. Myth and history

For quite a long time it has been fashionable to speak of Myth and History¹²; the implication is that there are certain cultures which have not yet attained (and indeed cannot attain) reality because they are caught up in the net of myth (*māyā*?) but that there are others that

10. So long as our use of objective-subjective terminology is a sort of abbreviation in our pragmatic life it will be tolerable. But to base precise philosophical thinking on it would be untenable.

11. First of all in a discussion about world-views hermeneutical considerations are indispensable. Understanding and interpretation are major components of our knowing and unless we study them and the nature of their processes we shall be building our dialogue on sand. Secondly, the truth-claims of all religions have to be taken seriously. This does not mean that one agrees to hold that all truth-claims are justified; this only means that one agrees to the stand that all truth-claims *could be right*. Our hermeneutic will have to work out principles which treat all truth-claims with equal justice. This will exclude setting up one complex of truth-claims as the criterion for evaluating other complexes of truth-claims.

12. The quest for the historical Jesus which began with the Orientalist Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768) (See Albert Schweitzer's *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, Band 3. Gesammelte Werke in fünf Bänden. Buch club ex libris Zurich) has not ended even today. Whereas Reimarus was the first to challenge the historicity of the Bible, it was D. F. Strauss who introduced the distinction between the Christ of Faith and the Jesus of History (1865). Though Strauss did not deny the historicity of Jesus, he contended under Hegel's influence that the narratives about Jesus had taken on mythological characteristics. He was also the first to introduce into the discussion the concept of 'myth' (in the pejorative sense), which found its culmination in R. Bultmann's de-mythologization programme. From here on the distinction between myth and history began to appear with increasing frequency (*Lexikon zur Theologie und Kirche*, Vol. 6. See "Leben-Jesu-Forschung"). Side by side with this in a somewhat parallel development the study of history on the one side and an increased appreciation of the nature of myth on the other have contributed to a better understanding between the relationship of history and myth.

have reached this goal because of their *historical consciousness*. Myth is supposed to be about the world of phantasy whereas historical consciousness belongs to the world of reality. The former is an imaginary world but the latter is the real world. This manner of speaking is not yet out of vogue¹³.

Historians themselves have supplied grist to this mill of theologians, because they believed that history tells us how things in the past really were¹⁴! Today's historians are more modest in their claims and perhaps more conscious of the nature of their enterprise.

On an earlier page we called the horizon of understanding the world-view or Mythos. That means that whatever be the characteristic of a world-view there is a fundamental direction in the way one experiences the world. This direction belongs to the level of the Mythos, the mythical level. The mythical level is not *what* we know but *what we know through*. Like our reading glasses, one does not see it, one sees through it. But because we see through it the world that is seen is perceived differently. Whether it is historical consciousness or some other consciousness, it belongs to the mythical level. Even the so-called historical consciousness is operative at this level. And when we describe this level as the mythical it is by no means in the pejorative sense. It is mythical because it is beyond the level of categories. They are concerned with *knowing about* but the mythical level is concerned with *knowing*.¹⁵

Hence historical consciousness can be paraphrased as the myth of history, the world-view that has history as its perspective.¹⁶ Before we proceed let us first clarify what we mean by history. I shall let a prominent historian

13. As an illustration see Eric C. Rust. *Towards a Theological Understanding of History* (New York. Oxford University Press 1963).

14. Cfr. E. H. Carr. *What is History?* (Pelican Reprint 1974).

15. Cfr. R. Panikkar's *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, pp. 98ff.

16. For an insightful contribution 'History as Myth: Some Implications for History and Theology' by W. Taylor Stevenson. see *Cross-Currents*, 20 (1970) 15-28.

(E.H. Carr, *What is History?* Pelican Reprint 1974) speak on the subject.

"The nineteenth century was a great age for facts. 'What I want', said Mr Gradgrind in *Hard Times*, 'is Facts ... Facts alone are wanted in life'. Nineteenth century historians on the whole agreed with him. When Ranke in the 1830s, in legitimate protest against moralizing history, remarked that the task of the historian was 'simply to show how it really was (*wie es eigentlich gewesen*)', this not very profound aphorism had an astonishing success. Three generations of German, British, and even French historians marched into battle intoning the magic words '*Wie es eigentlich gewesen*' like an incantation - designed, like most incantations, to save them from the tiresome obligation to think for themselves. The Positivists, anxious to stake out their claim for history as a science, contributed the weight of their influence to this cult of facts. pp. 9-10 (cf also pp. 10-11, 12, 15, 16, 19).

"The belief in a hard core of historical facts existing objectively and independently of the interpretation of the historian is a preposterous fallacy, but one which it is very hard to eradicate p.12 (cf also pp. 15, 16, 19).

"My first answer therefore to the question 'What is history?' is that it is a continuous process of interaction between the historian and his facts, an unending dialogue between the present and the past. p. 30

"In the first place, the facts of history never come to us 'pure', since they do not and cannot exist in a pure form: they are always refracted through the mind of the recorder. It follows that when we take up a work of history, our first concern should be not with the facts which it contains but with the historian who wrote it. p.22

"The second point is the more familiar one of the historian's need of imaginative understanding for the minds of the people with whom he is dealing, for the thought behind their acts: I say 'imaginative understanding', not 'sympathy', lest sympathy should be supposed to imply agreement. The nineteenth century was weak in medieval history, because it was too much repelled by the super-

stitious beliefs of the Middle Ages, or by the barbarities which they inspired, to have any imaginative understanding of medieval people... History cannot be written unless the historian can achieve some kind of contact with the mind of those about whom he is writing. p.24

"The third point is that we can view the past, and achieve our understanding of the past, only through the eyes of the present. The historian is of his own age, and is bound to it by the conditions of human existence. The very words which he uses - words like democracy, empire, war, revolution - have current connotations from which he cannot divorce them... The names by which successive French historians have described the Parisian crowds which played so prominent a role in the French revolution - *les sans-culottes*, *le canaille*, *les bras-nus* - are all, for those who know the rules of the game, manifestos of a political affiliation and of a particular interpretation. Yet the historian is obliged to choose: the use of language forbids him to be neutral. Nor is it a matter of words alone. pp. 25-26 (cf also p.27)

"The duty of the historian to respect his facts is not exhausted by the obligation to see that his facts are accurate. He must seek to bring into the picture all known or knowable facts relevant, in one sense or another, to the theme on which he is engaged and to the interpretation proposed... But this, in turn, does not mean that he can eliminate interpretation, which is the life-blood of history. p. 28, (cf also p.29)

"The historian without his facts is rootless and futile; the facts without their historian are dead and meaningless. p.30

"History then, in both senses of the word - meaning both the inquiry conducted by the historian and the facts of the past into which he inquires - is a social process, in which individuals are engaged as social beings; and the imaginary antithesis between society and the individual is no more than a red herring drawn across our path to confuse our thinking. The reciprocal process of interaction between the historian and his facts, what I have called the dialogue between present and past, is a dialogue not between

abstract and isolated individuals, but between the society of today and the society of yesterday. History, in Burckhardt's words, is 'the record of what one age finds worthy of note in another'. The past is intelligible to us only in the light of the present; and we can fully understand the present only in the light of the past. To enable man to understand the society of the past, and to increase his mastery over the society of the present, is the dual function of history. p.55

The purpose in quoting Carr is multiple. Because there is no history without interpretation, history belongs to the realm of interpretation in two ways: one, the *basic facts* of history are not *pure facts* but selected recordings by someone who in his way of thinking thought it worth recording; two, these basic facts are already interpretation in the sense that they are filtered through the world-view. The difference between the two is that the primary interpretation takes place at the mythical level and the secondary interpretation (which is really one articulation of the many possibilities offered by the mythical level) at the level of the historical epoch and culture to which the historian belongs.

Furthermore, the way in which his 'raw material' comes to the historian disproves the Positivists' epistemology built on the complete separation of subject and object. Even the so-called facts that are 'proposed for membership of the select club of historical facts' (Carr, p.12) are not a datum of experience as distinct from conclusions'. They are an inseparable compound of happening and belief.

If our conclusion is sound, then historical consciousness has its roots in the mythical level. In that sense then the familiar dichotomy between myth and history is untenable, since the perspective of history is grounded in myth.

This raises a new problem. If the western world-view has been characterized as historical and the eastern as mythical (sometimes as mythological), this characterization will not be fully accurate. Since the historical too is mythical, how is the eastern world-view (say, of Hinduism) to be characterized? If 'myth-and-history' is not a fitting

characterization of the world-views, what is? Before we turn to this discussion let us first see whether and where all world-views meet.

5. Different views of the same mountain

We have already come across E. H. Carr's metaphor of the mountain and its different views. It is, I believe equally apt here in our context of multiple world-views. The same mountain presents a different shape and form from different angles. Which shape does it really have? Obviously it has every shape that every angle can discover (not invent), but the shape is the outcome of both the viewer and the viewed.

If we take the world around us (=the outside world, as it were) as the mountain, then the world-views would be the different perspectives. Though the mountain presents a different shape to each perspective there is a certain commonality among the perspectives. However it should be remembered that this commonality is the product of abstraction. Concretely we always have the mountain as viewed from the various perspectives, never the mountain as such. When we speak of this commonality what we mean is that the same mountain is viewed from diverse perspectives. Similarly it is the same world that is experienced by various world-views. In our case it means that the world-view of history and other world-views are all concerned about the mountain and that no one world-view gives us *the real* view of the world. In a sense all the views are real views. Each has its own specific advantages as well as disadvantages. No one view can become the criterion that evaluates the other views. All are valid and hence complementary¹⁸. This does not imply they are all the same. To come to know the mountain in its richness and variety one has to learn the specific charm displayed by each perspective as also the blind spots.

18, If the world-views are in themselves valid, there must be some connection among them. The different views of the mountain cannot be unconnected among themselves. It is the one mountain which is viewed from different angles. Hence these perspectives must be complementary.

As a matter of fact what has happened till now is that one particular view (namely that of history) has been assumed to be the objective view and the rest have been labelled mythological. Furthermore what lent added weight to the view of history is that today's civilization (of automation and technology which is spreading all over the world irrespective of political ideology is itself a product of the world-view of history. Because of the many blessings (in disguise) which this civilization has brought to mankind, one is tempted to equate it with the real and the objective ('because it works!'). That this is a fallacy, should by now be clear from the methodological principles which we have discussed above¹⁹.

All world-views are a combination of the viewer and the viewed, of the subjective and the objective. But what if we were to press our analogy of the mountain a little further, is the mountain that the world-views are looking at?

My working hypothesis is the following: the western (Christian and post-Christian) world-view concentrates on change *qua* 'event' and the eastern (more specifically Hindu) world-view looks on change *qua* 'happening'. All the world-views have to admit change whatever the name they may employ for it. Change is common to all the world-views. Like the mountain in our analogy and the slimy feeling under our feet in the introductory illustration, change is what is commonly 'felt' by all the world-views. Change is that which is experienced and instantaneously interpreted by the world-viewer. Were we to revert to the objective-subjective terminology, change would be so to speak the objective aspect, it is the raw-material as it were that percolates through the Mythos.

The world-view of history looks on change as *event*. Event is change inasmuch as it affects Man. The dialogue between change and Man, is event. This is the gist of historical consciousness, which turns change into event. Historical consciousness gives birth to the search for the process which helps or hinders Man to realize himself.

19. Cf. R. Panikkar, *Myth, Faith and Hermeneutics*, pp. 99-100.

Since Man is not a mere individual but part of the organism called society, the search for such a process transforms a series of changes into a history of events. In such a world-view alone is change considered to be constitutive of Man. Man's self-understanding includes change. Because of this there is no question (in such a world-view) of *overcoming* change. Change is built in the very process that leads to the final goal. Hence change which leads to the goal will be event *par excellence*. Historical consciousness looks backward and forward and to such an event (say, the resurrection or the classless society or progress). Whatever the goal that the various trends that historical consciousness brings forth, strive towards, event or events constitute its material cause and efficient cause, the instrumental cause and the final cause.

That is not all. In this world-view what is true and real is inseparably connected with the nature of event²⁰. First of all the true will be that which corresponds to or is coherent with what *really* happened. (What is not connected with the events that occurred will consequently be considered illusory or unreal). This will be history and facts in one sense. History in another sense will be the thematic discovery of a significant set of interrelated causes of change in Man and his environment. Here is the place for historical facts. Similarly, being is understood from the experience of being as event, whether the event is temporal (as the God of history acting in history as the basis of history) or temporal (where act and potency constitute being) or a process (as studied in the sciences), or a coming to consciousness and so on. It is only in such a world-view that the category of history as a conscious dialogue between the past and the present events becomes eminently meaningful. The truth of this assertion will be seen more clearly in the following.

20. W. T. Stevenson in his *op. cit.* p. 22 quoting Wolfhart Pannenberg (*Revelation as History*, trans. David Graskou. New York: Macmillan Co., 1968) says: "Pannenberg maintains that in both the Old and New Testaments it is through the events of history that God proved his deity to all people". (Pannenberg pp. 135 ff).

The *Hindu world-view* is to be characterized not as mythic but as *cosmic* because its perspective is cosmic. Whether it looks at Man or his world, whether it looks at the Supreme Being or the ultimate cause the perspective is invariably cosmic. What does 'cosmic' mean? It means that the central category is the cosmos; for understanding anything and anyone in this world-view one has to take the cosmos as the background. Man, for example, is unintelligible without the cosmos; so too the Supreme Being. Hence cosmic means cosmo-centric.

To paraphrase, the stress is on wholeness, totality and fullness, whereas event focuses on the part and is therefore partial. But if change is to be taken note of in the cosmic world-view, it can be done only from the standpoint of the whole, never as a change in a part by another part. From the holistic aspect change cannot be understood as event, much less as history; change in this context is a mere happening in the whole and of the whole of reality. Viewed thus, happenings can never be changes in a part by a part but changes affecting the whole. The cosmic view always assumes that the whole is fully interconnected and that therefore when a part is affected the whole is in reality affected. History can never be of the whole but always of a part of the whole. This is so because the view-point of partiality can consistently assume that there can be and should be real agents of change. So, for example, the behaviour of one or more persons can force others to behave differently from what they would otherwise have done. That is to say, there can be real agents who transform changes into events. They make such significant changes that sooner or later a pattern of events can be discerned. This is a symptom of historical consciousness and the beginning of historical interpretation.

Such an angle of interpretation however is not possible in a cosmic world-view for the simple reason that ultimately there can be no real agents but only instruments of change. Whatever happens in the cosmos, happens because of the whole, not because of the parts.

It is the whole that acts through the parts and so there can be no question of a pattern of events that can be traced to one part of the cosmos. The analogy that can be of help here is that of the cosmic Purusha who acts through the different parts of his body. It is not the eye that sees but the Purusha who sees through the eyes; it is not the will that decides but it is the Purusha that makes the decision. When change is seen from the standpoint of the whole then no change can be interpreted as event. It is a mere happening that does not lend itself to historical interpretation.

The large net of the cosmic world-view cannot catch the small fish of historical facts. Indeed they are of no interest to it at all. There is reason for this. From the view-point of the cosmic the stress on history has its own disadvantages. For one thing stress on history leads to the belief in some sort of final fulfilment. Such a final fulfilment makes no sense in a cosmic world-view. If history is history it is supposed to lead somewhere; it is the search for this direction that is the foundation of every historical interpretation. It is this which differentiates history as historical interpretation from history as a mere enumeration of happenings²¹. But in the symbolism of the cosmic world-view there is no goal to be reached, no aim to be achieved. Unlike the (mythical) linear movement of history, the movement of cosmic view is spiral thus justifying movement without a goal. It is the spiral movement of nature's seasons where there is no season which is the first and no season which is the last, and where all seasons have equal position and meaning. Another disadvantage of history as seen from the cosmic view-point is that history assumes that bondage is due to historical happenings and that liberation is accordingly to be achieved through historical events too. This is not possible in the cosmic world-view, which views not actions as morally good or bad or neutral but the *intention* behind the action. Adam's *action* is construed as a disobedient act and Jesus' death on the cross is believed to be

21. See R. G. Collingwood. *The Idea of History* (Oxford University Press, Paperback Reprint 1976) p. 33

an act of supreme obedience. However the cosmic world-view would be more interested not in the act as in the intention with which such acts are performed. Action, whatever it might be, is merely part of a larger process which has to go on and hence it is not of the essence of liberation. The essence of liberation is in the inner intention with which the action is performed. It is the inner intention which binds or frees²². Such an inner intention can never be the stuff of history²³.

Though change is a factor common both to the Christian (historical) as well as to the Hindu (cosmic) world-view, it is perceived differently by them. The former views change as event and concretizes it in the form of history. It stresses historical time; and hopes that the time of significance that is allotted to each one, will be made significant so that history becomes salvation history. The time of significance has to be transformed into the time of salvation. Though salvation is in time it is not of time. It is in such a view alone that the belief in the Incarnation, for example, makes sense. Where events are real, God really intervenes in history. He becomes Man, really Man. His actions are salvific events and his life and death assume paradigmatic character. To this one's response accordingly can only be through one's actions, through one's life and death, through one's history and more especially through one's salvation history.

22. The 'physics' of an external action - to speak in an abstract manner are the same in both the world-views. I have been calling this aspect *change*. Its significance cannot be totally identical with this aspect. Whether it is historical consciousness or cosmic consciousness, what is of interest to them is the inner significance and it is this that both are after. The former reaches it from the outside as it were and the latter from the inside. Hence the difference in stress.

23. As in the interpretation of texts so too here the so-called 'intention' of the author (or agent) is of secondary importance in the writing of history. But from the cosmic point of view it is all-important. But historical interpretation is primarily about what happened and why, not about what people thought, or intended.

The cosmic view looks upon change as a mere happening of and in the whole. What confers reality, what makes things real in the cosmic world-view is the cosmic perspective of wholeness, totality, completeness and comprehensiveness. Whatever tends towards the holistic, whatever overcomes partiality, whatever leads to and helps towards becoming integral, is real. Incompleteness, partiality, fragmentariness, dissipation, dispersion, etc. are all symptoms of irreality and bondage. Change is seen as happening, not as event because an event stresses the partial aspect of a larger process. Hence the cosmic view stresses not this or that period of time but the significance of time as a whole. To experience the significance of time is to experience the wholeness of time: this is the same as experiencing time-and-eternity which is tempiternity²⁴. Thus, for example, the Avatāra is not a temporal but a tempiternal revelation. He is the paradigm of integration and wholeness, of concentration and completeness and of a total lack of all kinds of partiality like dissipation and dispersion. He performs actions holistically, never for selfish reasons but always for the welfare of the whole. It is the natural rightness of his inner intention with which he performs action that is the model for imitation, not the action itself. Since no action in itself binds or frees and since it is the inner intention which is responsible for this, the absolute selflessness with which an Avatāra acts is the example of inner freedom. An Avatāra, living fully in time and eternity, that is, tempiternally, acts thus holistically. To work with the right inner intention, to perform action selflessly, to act holistically - all these are then found to be synonymous.

24. Amaury de Riencourt is right when he asserts: "To the Indian, the supreme spiritual reality was a transfiguration of *space* and not of time, of Nature and not of History". (*The Soul of India*, Jonathan Cape, Thirty Bedford Square: London: 1961, p. 16). The Indian experience of time is more spatial, than temporal. For as de Riencourt asserts: "As a form of perception, *space divides* whereas time *unites*. Space is the domain of separate entities placed side by side, the domain of plurality". Ibid. p. 16. Cosmic consciousness is primarily concerned with the wholeness of space and extension and quantity, not with that of time. The very symbol of the Purusha as a concretization of cosmic consciousness is evidence for this.

Thus an Avatāra is not an efficient cause of liberation as the Incarnation is of salvation. Events like the Incarnation are meaningful only in the world-view of historical consciousness. The reason for this is that real efficient causes are consistent only in a world-view where the stress is on the part (i. e. Man) and not on the whole (i. e. Cosmos). In the cosmic world-view however there can be no real efficient causality but only final causality. It is only as a final cause that an Avatāra persuades one to work for Moksha through the attracting authority of his divine example, whereas the Incarnation effects salvation through acts arising from the power of his divine essence. In the cosmic world-view bondage is due to the fact that a part absolutizes itself by placing itself in the centre. This is the meaning of selfishness. Accordingly such a part has to be enlightened as to its true nature. In this regard the Avatāra is a true model; even he does not put himself in the centre of things. He too works for the welfare of all. This is what a liberated person does. To do this is to be liberated.

An historization of an Avatāra is methodologically as untenable as a cosmification of the Incarnation. The two world-views have to be preserved in their clarity and integrity. To reduce an Avatāra to an Incarnation and versa is to reduce historical consciousness to cosmic consciousness and vice versa. Any meaningful study of religion must first work out the knowing, understanding and interpretation processes common to all Men; then it should analyse the kind of language such an enterprise entails; thirdly, it should proceed to study the characteristics of the different world-views and focus on the net-work of symbols and beliefs they employ; and finally it should strive towards a hermeneutic which makes sense of the Universe of Faith and the pluriverse of beliefs. Our discussion of the cosmic and the historical is to be evaluated from this view-point.

In summary, then, every world-view is a product of experience and interpretation. No world-view presents a purely objective view; every single one is a combination

of both the subjective and the objective. A world-view affects the whole being, his knowing and his willing, his action and his passion. Though a world-view is always holistic it has a thrust, a thrust that displays historical consciousness or a thrust that manifests a cosmic perspective. It would be one-sided to maintain that the former thrust is totally ignorant of the cosmic perspective or that the latter is completely bereft of historical consciousness. We are talking of the thrust, the main stress. However, apologetic concerns do tend to make us one-sided so that we begin to talk of the objective nature of history or the comprehensive concern of adhyātmic consciousness. The historical and the cosmic world-views are each separately merely a view, not a vision. Only the two together, like the two eyes of the Purusha, will be capable of producing a vision, a depth-vision.

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The Cosmotheandric Intuition

The cosmotheandric awareness might well be considered the primordial form of consciousness¹. Indeed, it has glimmered since the dawn of humanity as the undivided awareness of the totality. But in its primordiality it is still an innocent and undiscriminated vision, which is more often than not quickly obnubilated by more glittering specialized discoveries, whether physical or metaphysical.

It seems that envisioning reality in terms of three worlds is an invariant of human culture, although this vision may be expressed in many ways. There is a world of the Gods, another of Men and a third of material things; there is Heaven, Earth and the Underworld; there is the sky, the earth and in between; there is the past, the present and the future; there is the ontological, the psychical and the corporal, etc. It has always been the function of wise Men to remind their contemporaries of the whole, and so rescue them from being dazzled by partial insights. Today, however, this wholistic intuition seems to be the undimmed hope of an increasing number of people. Man has never

1. In describing this intuition, the expression *theanthropo cosmic* might sound more accurate, because *anthropos* refers to Man as a human being, i. e., as distinct from the Gods, while *aner* tends to connote the male. Before Homer, the word did not solely connote the masculine, and in compounds it stood for the human, a sense which is in accordance with its Indo-European root (cf. the sanskrit *nā* (nar v.g. *nārāyaṇ*), and with the subsequent latin *vir* did not conserve. Moreover, the word *theandric* has a venerable history in western thought, and has always stood for the union of the human and the divine without confusion. Besides, the expression *cosmotheandric* is rather more euphonic than *theanthropo cosmic*. This article is mainly a revised extract of my much more extensive "*Colligite Fragmenta: For an Integration of Reality*", in *From Alienation to At-Oneness* Proceedings of the Theology Institute of Villanova University Edited by F. A. Eigo (The Villanova University Press), 1977, pp. 19-91.

been satisfied with partial truths, and now suspects that many traditional convictions may be, in fact, only partial. Man has always wanted to reach ultimate reality, but now begins to suspect that by ruthlessly transcending everything he may very well leave reality behind. Man is not satisfied to attain the peaks if from there he cannot at least see the valleys as well. The entire reality counts, matter as much as spirit, goodness as much as evil; science as much as mysticism, the soul as much as matter. It is not a question of regaining the primordial innocence we had to lose to become who we are, but of conquering a new one.

I have spoken of three real, although different, dimensions of reality. The metaphor 'dimension' is intended to help overcome the monistic temptation of constructing an oversimplified modalistic universe, viz., a universe in which all things are but variations and modes of one substance. At the same time, it is intended to overcome the dualistic temptation of positing two or more unbridgeable elements, substances or groups of reality which have only external or causal - and ultimately accidental - links with one another. Without denying differences, and even recognizing a certain hierarchical order within the three dimensions, the cosmotheandric principle stresses the intrinsic relationship between them, so that this threefold current forms the entire realm of all that is. More traditional names for this *radical relativity* of the entire reality would be the christian understanding of *Trinity*, the hindu notion of *advaita* and the buddhist *pratītyasamutpāda*.

This intuition, ultimately a mystical experience, is as such, ineffable. It is not an analytical conclusion. It is rather a synthetic vision which coordinates the different elements of knowledge with the knower, and then transcends them both. It is an intuition which dawns upon human awareness once we have glimpsed the intrinsic relation between knower, known and knowledge.

Reality shows this triple dimension of a metaphysical (or transcendent or apophatic) aspect, a noetic (or conscious

or thinking) factor, and an empirical (or physical or material) element. The cosmotheandric principle could be most simply stated by saying that the divine, the human and the earthly - however we may prefer to call them - are the three irreducible dimensions which constitute the real, i. e., any reality insofar as it is real. Everything that exists presents this triune constitution expressed in three dimensions. I am not only saying that everything is directly or indirectly related to everything else; I am also stressing that this relationship is constitutive of the whole, and that it flashes forth, ever new and vital, in every spark of the real. The relations which pervade the universe penetrate the innermost chambers of every being. The cosmotheandric intuition is not a tripartite division among beings, but an insight into the threefold core of all that is, insofar as it is.

Let us briefly describe these three dimensions:

1. Theos

To begin with, (every) being has an abyssal dimension, both transcendent and immanent. (Every) being transcends everything - including, and perhaps most pointedly, 'itself', which in truth has no limits. It is, further, infinitely immanent, i. e., inexhaustible and fathomless. And this is so not because the limited powers of our intellect cannot pierce deeper, but because this depth dimension belongs to (every) being as such. To place limits on being - *qua* being - is to destroy it. To totally isolate a being - were this possible - would amount to stifling it, killing it, cutting the umbilical cord which unites it to all being. In agreement with the greater part of human tradition, I call this dimension divine, but this does not imply that another name would not or could not do. The basic view here is the infinite inexhaustibility of any real beings, its ever-open character, its mystery, or its freedom, to put it in another parlance. This divine dimension is not an umbrella superimposed over beings, nor a merely extrinsic foundation for them; it is the constitutive principle of all things. Were it not for this dimension, ultimately no

change would be possible - there would be no 'room' for change. Or again, were it not for this dimension, any particular change would amount to a total transformation of the changing being, so that nothing would really change because there would be no continuity whatsoever. Some systems understandably prefer to call this dimension nothingness, emptiness, the vacuum that makes all the rest possible. Were it not for this dimension, any change would entail a total alienation, for no being would be flexible enough to allow for both variation and continuity. In the last analysis, no change would be possible.

Now with reference to Man, we see that God is not the absolute Other (besides the philosophical difficulty of such a formulation: absolute transcendence is contradicted by the very thought of it). Nor is God the same as we. We could say that God is the ultimate and unique I, that we are his 'thou's, and that this relationship is personal, trinitarian, nondualistic. But the cosmotheandric intuition does not need to be couched in such words. It is enough to observe that Man experiences the depth of his own being, the inexhaustible possibilities of and for relationship, his non-finite (i. e., infinite) character - for Man is not a closed, a finished product and cannot put limits on his own being. Man discovers and senses an inbuilt *more* to his own being; he discovers another dimension which he cannot manipulate or claim to control. There is always more than meets the eye, finds the mind or touches the heart. This *ever more* - even more than perceiving, understanding and feeling - stands for the divine dimension.

Moreover, God is not only the God of Man, but also God of the World. A God with no cosmological and, therefore, no cosmogonic functions would not be God at all, but a mere phantom. God is that dimension of more and better for the World as much as for man. Not only Man, but also the Cosmos is unachieved, not finished, infinite. The Cosmos is not an isolated bit of matter and energy; it is alive, it is on the move, it expands. A Cosmos without this divine urge, this dynamism built into its

innermost core, is surely not the Cosmos we experience, the proper garb of every actual theophany.

2. Anthropos

Man is more than an individual. Man is a *person*, a knot in a net of relationships which may reach to the very antipodes of the real. An isolated individual is not only incomprehensible but quite unviable. An isolated individual would be a corpse. Man is only man with the sky above, the earth below, and his fellow-beings all around. Just as 'individualizing' the human being amounts to cutting the umbilical cord which gives him life, so isolating Man from God and the World equally strangulates him. There is no Man without God and World.

Every real being, further, is connected with consciousness; it is somewhat thinkable and, by this very fact, connected with Man's awareness. We cannot speak, or think, or affirm anything whatsoever — positively or negatively — about anything which is not connected with our consciousness. The very act of affirming or negating would establish a connection, if none were there already. We may speak about a hypothetical astronomical body of unknown chemical constitution orbiting some unknown sun. Yet this sentence makes sense only insofar as it speaks from within known parameters projected onto an equally known hypothesis. In so many words, the waters of human consciousness wash all the shores of the real — even if Man cannot penetrate the *caelum incognitum* of the interior — and by this very fact, Man's being enters into relation with the whole of reality. The entire field of reality lives humanized in him. This transparent character of consciousness belongs not only to the one who knows, but also to the object known. We could call it the dimension of consciousness, but we may also call it the human dimension, for whatever consciousness may be, it is manifested in and through Man. Even if we defend the possibility of a consciousness totally independent of Man, this very affirmation — made by any human being — already contradicts such an independence.

This does not mean that everything can be reduced to consciousness. The cosmotheandric insight declares precisely that the three constitutive dimensions of the real are not mutually reducible; hence the material world and the divine aspect are irreducible to consciousness alone. And yet both are pervaded by, and in a certain sense co-extensive with consciousness. Were it not for this dimension, reality would not be knowable and awareness would be a superimposed and extrinsic characteristic of reality. In this sense, I am saying that every being has a constitutive dimension of consciousness, even if our understanding of that being does not hypostasize consciousness in 'it', but somewhere 'else' — in 'me' knowing 'it', for example, or in consciousness in general. Not only could we not know a being if it were not somehow related to consciousness, but this relation is also constitutive of that very being: awareness permeates every being.

3. Cosmos

(Every) being, finally, stands in the World and shares its secularity. There is nothing which enters human consciousness without at once entering into relation with the World. And this relationship is not merely external or accidental: anything that exists has a constitutive relation with the world of matter / energy and space / time. Even if we grant the possibility of an extra-worldly existence, even if we accept the possibility of an atemporal and a cosmic mystical experience, not only are all these figures of speech worldly ones, but the very act of negating any relation with the World already constitutes a relation, albeit a negative one. In a word, extra or ultra-mundanity has a secular aspect because it must invoke the *saeculum* as its referent. Am I saying then that God is worldly, or abolishing the distinction—so dear to civilized Man—between Nature and Culture? No. I am not abolishing these distinctions. I am only saying that a God without the World is not a real God, nor does such an abstraction exist. I am saying that this cosmic dimension is not a superfluous appendix to the other two dimensions, but

equally constitutive—both of the World and of each real part of the whole.

In this vision, the World is not a habitat or an external part of the whole or even of myself. The World is simply that greater body of which I am only imperfectly aware.

My relationship with the World is ultimately not separated from my relationship with myself: the World and I differ, but are not ultimately two separate realities, for we share each other's life, existence, being, history and destiny in a unique way. Something similar could be said regarding God and the World. The Cosmos is not just matter and convertible energy; the Cosmos has life and, like Man, a dimension of *plus*, a share in the divine dynamism. I am saying that there are no disembodied souls or disincarnated Gods, just as there is no matter, no energy, no spatio-temporal world without divine and conscious dimensions. A purely immaterial being is as much an abstraction as an exclusively material one; God is *not* without matter, space, time, body, and every material thing that is, is God's—or more precisely, God's 'thing', God's World.

Were it not for this spatio-temporal dimension, reality simply would not exist. Everything would be but the dream of a non-existing dreamer who has only dreamt about the dream, without ever actually existing any dream at all. Were it not for matter and energy, or time and space, not only would human discourse and thinking be impossible but God and Consciousness would also recede into sheer nothingness and meaninglessness. The final foundation for anything to exist is the same as because the World exists; the ultimate basis for Man's hope cannot be severed from the existence of the World,

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The moment has come to begin gathering up the fragments both of modern culture, which excels at analysis and specialization, and of the diverse civilizations of the world. We cannot allow any religion, culture or fragment of reality — even if it is labelled a 'left-over' by a

subsequent civilization or a broken piece by a 'higher' degree of consciousness — to be forgotten, neglected, despised or cast aside, if we are to achieve the total reconstruction of reality which has become the imperative of our day. We might well have formulated the cosmotheandric intuition from a different angle. A glance at the history of human consciousness shows it pendulating between an exaggerated unity, which swallows all variety, and an equally extreme atomism (even if couched in dualistic language), which makes ultimate intelligibility impossible, and breaks down peace and harmony in the bargain. The great masters and probably the simple folk kept the balanced vision, but the epigones run to extremes. The cosmotheandric experience is the attempt to regain, on a further turn of the spiral, the positive (and not merely dialectical) middle way between the paranoia of monism and the schizophrenia of dualism.

There is perhaps a slight semantic problem here. Perhaps these three names or groups of names should be reserved for the exclusivistic features of their respective dimensions. If so, the divine would stand for what is neither human nor cosmic, the human for what is neither divine nor cosmic, and the cosmic for what is neither human nor divine. But then how are the three linked together? How do we explain the extra- or super-human urges of Man? or the creative power of the Cosmos? or the humanizing bent of the divine? To be sure, it is all just a way of speaking, but just as surely do the idioms of modern Man require a thorough revision, a new language. Man does not become less Man when he discovers his divine calling, nor do the Gods lose their divinity when they are humanized, nor the World become less worldly when it bursts into life and consciousness. Perhaps what we are saying is that Man is at the crossroads, because the real is precisely the crossing of these three dimensions. Every real existence is a unique knot in this three-fold net. Here the cosmotheandric vision of reality stands for a wholistic and integral insight into the nature of all that there is. This vision does not gravitate around a single point — neither God nor Man nor Cosmos — and in this

sense *it has no center*. The three co exist; they interrelate and may be hierarchically constituted or coordinated —the way ontological priorities must be — but they cannot be isolated, for this would annihilate them.

The cosmotheandric intuition I have described represents, I think, the emerging religious consciousness of our times. Modern Man has killed an isolated and insular God; the contemporary Earth is killing a merciless and rapacious Man; and the Gods often seem to have deserted both Man and Cosmos. But having touched bottom, we perceive signs of Transfiguration and Resurrection. At the root of today's ecological sensitivity there is a mystical strain, and at the bottom of Man's self-understanding is a need for the infinite and non understandable. And at the very heart of the divine is an urge for time, space and Man.

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Mythical Language, its Origin and Significance

Ever since scholars in the West discovered Pāṇini, there began the scientific study of language¹, and the movement that thus began is even now going on with undiminished vigour. We know that language is an arbitrary means of vocal communication, which has to be distinguished from several other possible ways of communication. The qualification arbitrary is of the utmost importance², inasmuch as it serves to radically limit the potentialities of language, and this fact has tremendous impact on religious language, or, more specifically, on the theological formulation of the truths of the Christian faith. It is a well-known fact that the great controversies of the past had to do with the manipulation of language and its use as a means of expressing the Christian faith. In the present study we are not concerned with the history of the controversies of a bygone age but rather with the significance of the particular kind of religious language, viz. the mythical one.³

1. Details in H. Pedersen, *The Discovery of Language. Linguistic Science in the Nineteenth Century*, Bloomington, Ind., 1962.

2. For the sake of readers who may not be familiar with the technical studies by professional scholars, we shall, with the help of a concrete example, clarify the element of arbitrariness in language. The domestic animal that is called *dog* in English, is called *kalb* in Arabic, *canis* in Latin, *patti* in Malayalam, and so on. If language were a natural means of communication, there would not have been this difference in expression.

3. There is quite an extensive bibliography on religious language, which need not be cited here. On the question of meaning, cf. K. Luke, "Semantics and Hermeneutics", *Journal of Dharma* 5 (1980) pp. 20-37 (with bibliographical indications).

I

Man, even though he may not be pious in the conventional sense, does have the experience of God, and the following account, left by a certain Protestant clergyman is quite noteworthy: "The perfect stillness of the night was thrilled by a more sublime silence. The darkness held a presence that was all the more felt because it was not seen. I could not any more have doubted that He was there than that I was. Indeed, I felt myself to be, if possible, the less real of the two."⁴ It may not be too much off the mark if we venture to affirm that all readers without exception have had, some time or other in life, the experience here described, though they may not have submitted to a thorough analysis.

No less significant are the following words of Simone Weil, a Jewish lady who had the experience of Christ (and who sacrificed her life serving the sick during the second world war): "Christ himself came down and took possession of me . . . In this sudden possession of me by Christ, neither my senses nor my imagination had any part; I only felt in the midst of my sufferings the presence of a love, like that which one can read in the smile of a beloved face." She continues: "Sometimes . . . Christ is present with me in person, but his presence is infinitely more real, more moving, more clear than on that first occasion when he took possession of me."⁵ Let us now try to understand in depth man's experience of God.⁶

God is experienced as *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*, as a mystery that is awe-inspiring and fascinating. The English word mystery is a modification of Greek

4. For the full text, cf. W. James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Edinburgh, 1977) p. 81. James gives several interesting citations in his book.

5. J. M.M. Wijngaards, *Come and See* (Bangalore, 1978) pp. 175ff.

6. We follow here the penetrating study of religious experience in R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford, 1968) pp. 12-40.

*mustērion*⁷, from *mustēs*, a nominal form created from the base *mu-s-*⁸. In classical Greek there is the verb *mus* which attests several nuances: 1) intransitively, "to close, shut" (said of the eyes, lips etc.); 2) transitively, "to close, shut"; 3) metaphorically, "to be lulled to sleep, abate". We can say that *mustērion* is, from the etymological point of view, that over which silence must be kept⁹, and when God is defined as mystery what is meant is that he is the one about whom silence must be kept precisely because he is beyond the categories of our thought and expression; in other words, he is the transcendent one who can never be adequately defined by human language. It is not necessary to dwell here on the question of divine transcendence and immanence, which has no special bearing on the problem of religious language.

As the transcendent one, God is also wholly the other one who inspires in man feelings of reverential awe, which is what is meant by the definition *mysterium tremendum*.¹⁰ We must know that God's otherness can be

7. G. Bornkamm, "Musterion" *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (10 vols., Grand Rapids, Mich., 1962ff.) IV, pp. 803-28. (H. Frisk, *Griechisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (2 vols., Indogermanische Bibliothek. II. Reihe - Wörterbuch, Heidelberg, 1970-73) II, pp. 279-81. J. B. Hofmann, *Etymologisches Wörterbuch des Griechischen* (Munich, 1966) pp. 206, 209. J. Pokorný, *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch* (2 vols., Bern, 1959-69) I, pp. 781f. E. Schwyzer, *Griechische Grammatik. I Allgemeiner Teil. Lautlehre. Wortbildung. Flexion* (Handbuch der Altertumswissenschaft, II. Abt., II. Teil, I. Band, 4th ed., Munich, 1968) pp. 686, 721).

8. The element *mu-* (also *mu-*) which is of onomatopoeic origin, is extant in some of the Indo-European languages; compare Sanskrit *mu-kha-*, "face", and *mu-ka-*, "dumb". The extension *-s-* underlies Greek *muo* which is contracted from *mu-s-yo*; compare the first aorist form *emusa*. The suffix *-terion* denotes places and instruments; e.g. *bouleu-terion*, "council chamber", *dikas-terion*, "judgment hall", *desmo-terion*, "prison", etc. For more details, cf. K. Luke, "The Dance of the Godhead in Hindu Tradition", *Indian Theological Studies* 18 (1981) pp. 47-70 (p. 68, n.58).

9. Bornkamm, *op. cit.*, p.803.

10. Cognate with Latin *tremo* are Greek *treo*, "to flee from fear, flee away", *tremo*, "to tremble, quake", *trepo*, "to turn, take to flight" and *trecho*, "to run, run away", which cast light on the nuances of the Latin root (cf. *tremor*).

expressed in terms either of the sublime, the noble, the elevated, the beautiful etc. or of the ugly, hedious, ridiculous, grotesque, repulsive etc. The representation of God (Christ) as Pantocrater in the icons of the Eastern Church, for instance, is a concrete example of the use of the category of the sublime to express divine transcendence. The celebrated principle, *Du sublime au ridicule il n'y a qu'un pas* ("from the sublime to the ridiculous there is only one step")¹¹, has its validity in the sphere of religion as well, as may be seen in the representation of Kali, the goddess of death and destruction, in Hindu art: here hediousness has the function of expressing transcendence.

The transcendent can also attract man, when God is experienced as *mysterium fascinans*¹². God irresistibly attracts the believer to himself who, as a result, feels drawn, even against his will, to his creator, lord and master, and here we have the source of mysticism. Mystics, whatever be their religious affiliation, feel drawn to union with God, the *summum bonum*. Even Judaism¹³ and Islam¹⁴, two religions which lay the utmost emphasis on transcen-

11. Tolstoy, *War and Peace* (2 vols., Penguin Classics, Harmondsworth, 1961-2) II, p. 1267.

12. The verb *fascino* means "to enchant, bewitch"; it is formed from *fascinum* (also *fascinus*), "the evil eye, witchcraft, an enchanting, bewitching", and also "penis", a replica of which used to be hung around the neck as protection against the evil eye; this image came to be personified and divinized, and thus there arose the god *Fascinus*, "Phallus". For further references cf. K. Luke, *op. cit.*, p. 68, n. 59.

13. On Jewish mysticism, cf. G.G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. London, 1955. (Cf. too K. Hruby, "Elements de spiritualite juive", *La mystique et les mystiques* (Paris, 1965) pp. 157-256.)

14. Discussions in T. Andrae, *Islamische Mystik*. Urban-Taschenbucher, 2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1980. R. Arnaldez, "La mystique musulmane", *La mystique*, pp. 571-648. L. Gardet- G. C. Anawati, *Mystique musulmane*. Paris, 1961. R. A. Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism*. London, 1921 (discusses three prominent mystics). R. C. Zaehner, *Hindu and Muslim Mysticism*. (Jordan Lectures in Comparative Religion 5, London, 1960) stresses dependence on Indian tradition.

dence, had their mystics, who, understandably enough, stressed God's otherness¹⁵, and Hinduism on the other hand regards the highest mystical stage as identification with the Absolute Spirit.

Man reacts quite spontaneously to his experience of God either through action or through thought, and the former takes concrete form and shape as worship and the latter as the science of the divine. Man is a being defined by bodiliness¹⁶, which demands that he give expression to his internal experience by means of actions or doings which can be of various kinds; thus ritual castration at the height of religious frenzy such as was customary in some ancient cults¹⁷, men drilling holes in the penis, passing through the holes a cord, and then dancing in a circle¹⁸, self-laceration, and the like are all actions involving a reaction to the experience of the divine, but this is not the aspect that is of interest to us.

Reaction to the experience of God in terms of thought includes within its range everything from the crudest form of myths to the most abstract and subtle forms of the philosophy of religion and theology. Modern philosophers of religion and theologians make use of abstract, technical jargon which is beyond the grasp of the non-specialist but which, as will be clarified later on, has its moorings in the language of myth. Before we analyse the

15. According to Scholem, there is "no trace of a mystical union between soul and God. Throughout there remained an exaggerated consciousness of God's otherness..." (*op. cit.*, pp. 55f.)

16. This neologism renders German *Leiblichkeit*, a term popularized by modern thinkers.

17. L. H. Gray, "Eunuch", *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics* (13 vols., Edinburgh, 1974) V, pp. 579-84. Ritual castration is even now practised in India.

18. For an account of this macabre ceremony held in high esteem by the American Indians, cf. V. W. von Hagen, *The World of the Maya* (New York, 1960) pp. 138f.

nature of mythical language, we must be clear about the nature of myth, a time-honoured category of religious thought¹⁹.

II

What is a myth? How are we to define it? All sorts of definitions have been given, and the simplest and the best seems to be that it is an intuition expressed in terms of transcendence. There is a twofold *cogito*, reflective and pre-reflective²⁰; intuitions belong to the pre-reflective field of man's *cogito*²¹, which, as modern thinkers have pointed out, is the most fertile matrix of thought. To take the case of men of the prescientific age, they, gazing with wonder on the death of vegetation in summer and its reappearance with the first rains, came to the conclusion that this process represented the death and resurgence of the god of life²². This is a typical intuition expressed in terms of transcendence: the bringing of the godhead into the process of nature is precisely the element of transcendence that is so basic to myths.

19. On myth, cf. G. Stahlin, "Muthos", *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* V, pp. 762-95. (E. Cassirer, *Philosophy of Symbolical Forms*, II. *Mythical Thought*. New Haven, 1965. H. Frankfort, et alii, *Before Philosophy. The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man*. Harmondsworth, 1966. F. Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion* (Die Religionen der Menschheit 1, 2nd ed., Stuttgart, 1979) pp. 283-91. G. van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (2 vols., New York, 1963) II, pp. 413-17. T. A. Seboek (ed.), *Myth. A Symposium*. Bloomington, Ind., 1965. Etymological discussions in Frisk, *Worterbuch* II, pp. 264f.)

20. This is a distinction that is basic to existential philosophy; cf. W. A. Luijpen, *Existential Phenomenology* Pittsbergh, Pa., 1960) pp. 74ff. On *Cogito*, cf. M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London, 1970) pp. 369-409.

21. Here are two definitions of intuition: "saisie immediate d'une chose individuelle, qu'elle soit sensible ou spirituelle" (F. Gregoire, 'Notes sur les termes 'intuition' et 'experience' ', *Revue Neoscholastique de Louvain* 44 (1946) pp. (401-15; p. 411); "vue directe et immediate d'un objet de pensee actuellement present a l'esprit et saisie dans sa realite individuelle" (L. Lalande, *Vocabulaire technique et critique de la philosophie* (Paris, 1951) p. 537).

22. Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods. A Study of Ancient Near Eastern Religion as Integration of Society and Nature*. Chicago, 1969.

From myth must be distinguished mythology, that is, the literary elaboration of the primordial myths (cf. below). *Linga Purana*²³ records how there once arose a dispute between the members of the sacred triad. Each of them was claiming that he was the greatest, and when Śiva put forward his claim, the other two asked him to prove it. He then showed them his *linga*²⁴ which was so long that his rivals could not see its extremities! Brahmā, assuming the form of an eagle, soared higher and higher into the atmosphere but in vain, and Viṣṇu, transforming himself into a boar, dug deeper and deeper into the earth but again in vain. The two thereupon acknowledged Śiva's greatness. What we have here is mythology.

There are some primordial varieties of myths²⁵, the first of them being the ritual myth, which is meant to give an explanation of the origin and meaning of some rite or ceremony. In this case myth is the rationale of what the Greeks used to call *dromenon*, the ritual or that part of cult which consists in doing something²⁶. In Babylon there was the, *akitu* or New Year Festival²⁷, celebrated with great pomp and solemnity, and one of its chief items was

23. This is one of the eighteen Mahapuranas and is thoroughly sectarian; on the myth, cf. K. Luke, "The Dance of the Ccdhead", p. 32, n. 17.

24. The etymology and meaning of this term call for some comments. The neuter noun *lingam* means "mark, sign", and derivatively also "Geschlechts-merkmal, sign of sex", and its use with reference to Śiva is an epico-classic development. Several etymological suggestions have been put forward, though none of them is beyond objection; the likelihood is that the word is related to Iranian *ringa*-, "sign, mark".

25. Succinct discussions in S. Hooke, *Middle Eastern Mythology* (Harmondsworth, 1966) pp. 11-17. Thorough discussion in Heiler, *Erscheinungsformen und Wesen der Religion*, pp. 283-91.

26. This is a passive participle (neuter) denoting anything that is done, as distinct from anything that is suffered or borne passively; it is used in parallelism with *muthos*, "myth", which has to do with thought and speech (and is opposed to *ergon*, "work").

27. Luke, Iddindagan and "Inanna: A Hieros Gamos Text of the 20th Century, B. C." *The Living Word* 82 (1976) pp. 79-101 (on the term *akitu*, cf. p. 79, n. 2).

the recitation of *Enūma Elish*²⁸, the epic of creation: the composition explains the meaning of the solemn rite at the commencement of the New Year.

There are in the next place myths of origin, which are aetiological in nature²⁹, serving to account for the origin of the world, man, different customs etc. The kern of *Enūma Elish* is the myth of the origin of the world and mankind; the Sumerian myth of the pickaxe³⁰ explains the origin of this implement of farmers; the Israelite myth of Jacob's struggle with God (Gen 32:23-33) is meant to account for a food-tabu prevalent among the people of Israel³¹.

There is furthermore the prestige myth, intended to invest the birth and exploits of heroes with an aura of wonder and mystery. The mythological stories about the birth and boyhood of Kṛṣṇa represent elaborations of the hero or prestige myth, and this is also the case with the stories about Sargon of Agade³², Cyrus of Persia³³, and other historical personages³⁴.

28. A. Heidel, *The Babylonian Genesis, The Story of Creation* (Chicago, 1969 (cf. pp. 18-60)).

29. Aetiology [whence the adjectival form aetiological] is a term coined by physicians to denote the science of causes, namely, of diseases; it has been borrowed by specialists in literature who use it as *Gattungsbezeichnung*, viz. to denote narratives created to account for the prevalence of some custom or other, the use of a name, the existence of a tribal group etc.

30. S. N. Kramer, *Sumerian Mythology, A Study of Spiritual and Literary Achievement in the Third Millenium* (New York, 1961) pp. 51-53.

31. Luke, "Jacob's Wrestling at Penue!l", *Studies in the Book of Genesis* (Alwaye, 1975) pp. 116-25.

32. This celebrated Semitic conqueror is said to have been born of a temple prostitute, who enclosed the babe in a basket and cast it into the river Euphrates; the basket was picked up by the farmer Akki who reared the babe and later on appointed him gardener.

33. A. T. Olmstead, *History of the Persian Empire* (Chicago, 1965) pp. 34-58.

34. Including even such men as Hitler, Mussolini, Stalin, Mao and a host of others.

The last variety of myth we wish to mention here is the eschatological one, which occurs in Zoroastrianism³⁵, Judaism and Christianity. Eschatology such as has been developed by the Israelites and, at a later period in history, by the apocalyptists, involves a return, at the end of time, of the paradisiacal age of bliss. We may, *mutatis mutandis*, call this way of looking at things the myth of the eternal return³⁶.

III

We come now to the problem of mythical language: that is to say, the language used to express the intuition that is basic to every myth, or, in other words, to the problem of religious (theological) language, which has of late been the object of intense study³⁷. The first thing to be noted with regard to mythical and religious speech is that it makes use of the language of every day, and that which makes it religious is the element of intentionality, i. e., the reference to transcendence. The need of referential models which can alone make speech meaningful and significant is recognized by all³⁸, and in the case of religious discourse the point of reference is transcendence itself. This is not the place to explain what transcendence is, and how man, through pre-reflective *cogito*, comes to apprehend it; we restrict ourselves to the language (which, as should be clear from our discussions so far, is mythical) used to express transcendence.

The language of religious discourse is derived from a tripple experience, to wit, of space, time and bodiliness. Modern thinkers have been quite emphatic on the part the body has to play in the acquisition of knowledge

35. M. Boyce, *A History of Zoroastrianism*. 1. *The Early Period* Handbuch der Orientalistik. I. Abt., VIII. Band, 1. Abschn., Lief. 2, Hef. 2A, Leiden, 1975.

36. M. Eliade, *Cosmos and History, The Myth of the Eternal Return* New York, 1969.

37. J. M. Angadiyil, *From Modal-Language. A Plea for the Cognitivist. of Religious Language*. Louvain Ph. D. Diss., 1980.

38. Luke, "Semantics and Hermeneutics", pp. 35f.

and in its communication to others³⁹. To take a concrete example, X goes to the room of Y and when, on not finding him there, he makes the statement, "He is not here", he is speaking in terms of the body of X. Or again, I am present to the European as an Asiatic, to the Chinese as an Indian, to the Panjabi as a Malayali, to women as a male, to teenagers as an elderly person and so forth, and all this involves a reference to my body. We are not at all exaggerating when we say that there is no communication apart from the covert or overt concurrence of the body.

Religious experience has to do with the body, inasmuch as it affects the whole man, and not a part such as the soul, the mind and the will. The person who goes into deep ecstasy does not perceive what transpires around him, and those who are at the height of religious frenzy mutilate themselves and do not feel any pain, because their body is itself caught up in the experience of the divine. When the author of Psalm 34 invites his hearers to taste and see how sweet the Lord is (v.8)⁴⁰, he is making a statement regarding his experience of God in terms of the body; again when the poet who composed Psalm 27 refers to his beholding the beauty of God (v.4)⁴¹, he is elucidating a profound religious experience with an appeal to the body. We have, then, to avow that the experience of transcendence involves the body.

Man's being constituted on the phenomenological level by the body means that he is being defined by bodi-

39. Lùijpen, *Existential Phenomenology*, pp. 180ff. Merleau-Ponty *Phenomenology of Perception*, pp. 67ff.

40. The Hebrew verb underlying "taste" signifies man's taking in of food and enjoying the pleasure it gives to his whole being (compare Ex 16:31. Num 11:8. Job 6:6).

41. "To behold" renders a Hebrew verb which stands for visionary experience and the reception of God's word of revelation. In Ps 27:4 it is indicative of the pious man's gazing upon God's beauty and finding therein full satisfaction. Beauty means grace, gracefulness, attractiveness, i.e. God as *mysterium fascians*. The part bodiliness has to play in the experience underlying Ps 27:4 is undeniable.

liness, and it is this factor that brings him into contact with the world in which he lives and operates. The world is best defined as the point of convergence of time and space, which is also the locus where man exercises his freedom and creates his own history⁴². Though animals have experience of time and space, they are not able to bring them together into a meaningful point and operate there.

The body is a dynamic principle, in the sense that "my body appears to me as an attitude directed towards a certain existing or possible task⁴³". I sit in my room and copy out this statement from the book which lies open before me, with the intention of clarifying the part the body plays in religious language, and as I do so, there is the concurrence of spatiality, spatiality of both position and situation. "In my room" involves spatiality of position, something which is obvious, and also spatiality of situation, namely, the one created by the working of my intention, my project, my task. All this is a source of pre-reflective knowledge, whose elements can be unconsciously drawn upon when there is need to speak of religious matters.

Time has been described as *Nacheinander der Jetztpunkte*⁴⁴, and it exists for me only because I am situated in it, because the whole of my being is not given to me, so to speak, ready made. The field of the present includes within its range the primary past and the future and my body as task or project, in the spatiality of the concrete situation, gravitates towards the future. Time is thus a datum that affects me here and now, inasmuch as I am a body-person, and engenders in me pre-reflective knowledge which can of course be explicit through reflective *cogito*.

42. The idea of the world is basic to modern existential thought for, as far as man is concerned, to be is to be in the world. Details in Luijpen, *op. cit.*, *passim*.

43. Merleau-ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 100:

44. Merleau-Ponty, *op. cit.*, p. 412, n. 1.

Reverting now to religious discourse, spatial language is an integral part of it, as may be gathered from statements such as "Our father in heaven", "Christ ascended to heaven", "The Holy Spirit came down upon the Apostles", "The devil took Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple", "Yahweh came from Sinai" (Dt 33:1), "The Spirit . . . took me away" (Ez 3:14) etc.

The language of time is no less clear in religious speech; compare, "Christ rose again on the third day", "He ascended to heaven forty days after the resurrection", "Jesus fasted forty days and forty nights", "Christ will come at the end of time", "There will ensue eternal life", "I am coming soon" (Rev 22:12), "The former things have passed away" (Rev 21:4) and so on.

Expressions such as God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, etc. are inspired by the experience of bodiliness. The abstruse and abstract discussions on the processions and relations within the Most Holy Trinity make use of the language of bodiliness. John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh" is a confession of faith inspired by the all too human experience of the body. "They shall see God" (Mt 5:8), "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne", (Is 6:1), "I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right of God" (Acts 7:56). "Christ died for our sins . . . was buried . . . was raised up" (1 Cor 15:3) and the like include an undeniable reference to the category of bodiliness.

Even the most abstract dogmatic definitions are formulated with the help of the language of bodiliness, as is vouched for by the words of the Council of Chalcedon,⁴⁵ *en duo phusesin*, "in duabus naturis" and *eis hen prosōpon kai mian hypostasin*, "in unam personam atque unam subsistentiam". It may be noted here in passing that the general tendency in India has been to be-

45. H. Denzinger - K. Rahner, *Enchiridion Symbolorum* (29th ed., Barcelona, 1953) 148 (pp. 70f.).

little the body and regard it as the soul's prison⁴⁶, but despite all that the Absolute is defined as *sat-cit-anandam*, where every element implies a clear reference to bodiliness. Body-language is, then, unavoidable in religious discourse.

The basic thing in all the examples cited in the present section is the highly original manipulation of patterns of thought and expression — in other words, of language—derived ultimately from the experience of space, time and bodiliness. The language created on the basis of this unique experience serves to describe the primordial varieties of myth mentioned in Section II, and the whole of abstract and scientific theology can ultimately be reduced to these fundamental types.

Thought and worship, *muthos* and *dromenon*, theology and liturgy, *lex credendi* and *lex orandi* are inseparable factors in the life of *homo religiosus*, and the mythical dimension we have been studying has in fact moulded the forms of worship in all religions. Christian liturgy is therefore most intimately bound up with the world of myth, a fact which, queerly enough, remains much unknown to theologians and liturgists.

IV

The Scholastic theologians of the Middle Ages, in order to safeguard the validity of religious language, introduced the principle of analogy: when we speak of God, we are making use of analogical language. They, fully aware that God transcended all the categories of human speech and thought, emphasized that the only knowledge we have of God is derived *via negativa*. Later on, however, lesser minds (we may even say, non-minds) erred by taking as absolute truth statements which, in the

46. For the Greeks the body (*soma*, was the prison *scma*, literally, "prison, grave") of the soul, and Christians have, under the influence of Greek tradition, misinterpreted the Pauline expressions "body of sin" (Rom 6:6) and "body of death" (Rom 7:24). These phrases stand for man's sinful self which is the source of moral evil, and not the body in the literal sense.

final analysis, were of mythical origin and were no more than approximations of truth. A good bit of heresy-hunting in the past⁴⁷, the controversies that brought about the separation of the East from the West and the division of the West into two, the virulent and vitriolic polemic within the Christian confessions themselves, have very often been due to the failure of non-minds to grasp the real nature of religious language which is fundamentally mythical.

Misunderstanding of the nature of religious language on the part of Catholics has, ever since the rise of the science of biblical criticism, been an insurmountable obstacle to the truly scientific study of the Scriptures⁴⁸. The story in Gen 3, for instance, used to be interpreted in the strict literal sense, and this led to the rejection of the theory of evolution, for the simple reason that it was incompatible with the doctrine of original sin⁴⁹. Biblical fundamentalism, both Catholic and non-Catholic, had its roots in a stupid misconception of the nature of religious discourse.

Another monstrous instance of the failure to grasp the inner nature of religious language is represented by the programme of demythologization (a programme which is now practically dead and gone). True, its proponents

47. The case of Nestorius is typical: he was not a Nestorian, and if he was condemned it was only because his arch-rival, the unscrupulous crook and schemer Cyril of Alexandria, wanted it. The conventional manuals of Church history do not mention the fact that he distributed money among the Conciliar Fathers to have them on his side. Since this is a matter pertaining to Church history, bibliographical references are not given.

48. G. Soares-Prabhu, "The Historico-Critical Method: Reflections on its Relevance for the Study of the Gospels in India Today", *Theologizing in India* (Bangalore, 1981) pp. 314-67 (cf. especially the pertinent remarks in p. 350, n. 9).

49. Genesis 3 is a modification of the myth of primordial man's who lived in happiness in the garden of God and was subsequently expelled thence because of his sin, a myth whose survivals may be seen in prophetic literature. Discussions in Luke, *Genesis 1-3. An Exposition* (Alwaye, 1980) pp. 105ff., 154ff.

were motivated by the highly laudable intention of making the Christian message acceptable to the man of the scientific age, for whom the three-tier world-view of the NT remains meaningless. The thing to have been done is to instruct the people of the space age in the significance of myth in order to enable them to grasp its meaning.

Western man who thinks himself to have been emancipated from the mythical world-view of the past, and his lackeys in the East, have ended by creating new myths. Charms, amulets etc. are available in the great cities of the West; drugs are used to have the experience of transcendence and Europeans and Americans are willing to accept as the Absolute men like Sai Baba⁵⁰ and fall prostrate at his feet. It is really a curious sight to see Westerners wearing the pig-tail or tuft and chanting Hare... Here we have what may be called the most absurd form of a demythologized, stinking variety of Christianity.

It is worthwhile to recall here that the great Universities of Japan have prestigious chairs of Buddhist studies, where the basic works that serve as manuals include Vasubandhu's *Abhidharmakośa*⁵¹ and Nāgārjuna's *Mahāprajñāpāramitāśāstra*⁵², two subtle metaphysical treatises that include a vast corpus of mythology. The Japanese

50. This godman has a special way of purifying his devotees: "Baba reached down and unzipped Patrick's fly and pulled his tool out... Baba lifted his robe and inserted the thing... Baba collected Patrick's semen in a little white handkerchief... Baba told him that the whole world lay in the Palm of his hand". Several interesting details in R. T. Brooke, *Lord of the Air* (London, 1976) pp. 165f. (The author, a disciple of the Baba, had himself been purified in the same way.)

51. Vasubandhu (5th century A. D.) was a native of Purusapura who lived and worked first in Kashmir and then in Ayodhya, and the big question is whether he is to be identified with Vasubandhu, the brother (disciple?) of Asanga; on the problem, cf. A. Bareau, "Der indische Buddhismus", *Die Religionen Indiens*. III. *Buddhismus - Jinismus - Primitivvölker* (Die Religionen der Menschheit 13, Stuttgart, 1964) pp. 86f.

52. Nagarjuna (3rd century A. D.), probably a native of Andhra Pradesh, was the founder of the Madhyamaka School, and was, according to Heinrich Zimmer, *Philosophies of India* (Cleaveland, 1964) p. 510,

who, in the field of technology, are as advanced as the countries of the West and far ahead of the Russians, are able to find values for life in mythology! This should be an eye-opener for Christians who are upset by the mythical elements in their faith. In India there are Hindus who are experts in nuclear physics, aeronautics, molecular biology etc. and who nevertheless relish the Purāṇas, something which should make Indian Christians who are all admiration for the West think twice before they condemn myth.

In defence of myth and mythical language it may be said that they belong to the sphere of intentionality⁵³, it is intentionality that gives them meaning. Furthermore mythical language is evocative, unlike scientific language which is exclusively conceptual and therefore has no power to touch man's emotions⁵⁴. Religion, which has so much to do with man's emotions, must therefore make use of mythical language, and religion without the mythical element will be as ugly and worthless a skeleton as demythologized Christianity.

Calvary, Trichur-680 004
Kerala

K. Luke

"one of the subtlest metaphysicians the human race has yet produced". The massive work attributed to him (surviving only in Chinese) was written by somebody whose identity remains unknown.

53. This point has been studied in depth by R. Ingarden, *The Literary Work of Art. An Investigation on the Borderlines of Ontology, Logic and Theory of Literature* (Evanston, 1980) pp. 63-66, 117-25, etc.; cf. too the same scholar's *The Cognition of the Literary Work of Art* (Evanston, 1979) pp. 25, 37, 40-47 etc.

54. Compare M. Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston, 1979) pp. 56ff., 206ff.

Praying and Process-thinking

'In Him we live and move,
in Him we exist.' (Acts 17:28)

'The power of God is the worship He inspires.'
(A. N. Whitehead)

With the ebb of the flood of secularization, there is again room for calm reflexion on prayer. The recent criticism of religion, whereof J. A. T. Robinson was an exponent, has opened the way for some to atheistic humanism, for others it contributed to a more authentic faith while still others took offence and swore by the old traditions. Unfortunately, Robinson has often been misunderstood. He did not at all give up the personal God nor was he opposed to worship and cult. Also Bonhoeffer has been misunderstood by a good many. His plea for religionless Christianity was not disguised secularism. The god he declared dead was the 'deus ex machina' of the stop-gap religion. It is a real pity that both Bonhoeffer as well as Robinson, have been misused by so many progressists while they have been anathematized by the fundamentalists. Their plea for a wordly holiness and an authentic and relevant faith has met with a favourable echo by many critical christians.

Criticism of religion belongs to the growing process of the christian faith. Christianity is more than a religion. That is why each form of spirituality and each practice of devotion fall within the criticism of the hypocrites as well as the magic of the heathen has been blamed by Jesus (Mt. 6: 5-7). 'God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and in truth' (John 4: 24). No hypocrisy, no verbiage, no pseudo-religion. Wherever the religious practice becomes a goal in itself, the danger of alienation is real. The true christian prayer is the opposite of an alibi for world-commitment and personal growth.

True prayer is the expression of authentic faith; I mean a faith that leavens and bears the everyday existence. Religion for the sake of man (in his openness to God): This is the basic principle of christian spirituality. 'I require mercy, not sacrifice' said the Son of Man, who is 'sovereign over the Sabbath' (Mt. 12: 7-8). The Sabbath is there for man. Religion which drifts us away from our concrete world and from ourselves, also drifts us away from God. We are to avoid the dual crag of formalism and magic, even in periods of liturgical renewal and of religious renaissance. Also the cry 'Jesus, I love Him so!' calls within the criticism of the authentic Cross-faith. The primary religious virtue is sincerity, a penetrating sincerity', as Whitehead put it¹.

The image of God and the concept of prayer

Criticism of religion implies a criticism of the way of representing God. This was already so at the time of the prophets of ancient Israel, Amos, Micha, Isaiah, Jeremiah. Worshipping of the golden calf has been a lasting temptation; ritualism could have gone together with social injustice. The history of the nineteenth century criticism of religion confirms the connection between the image of God and the concept of religion. Remember the so called 'Masters of suspicion' (Feuerbach, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud).

No doubt, there is a difference between praying to God and reflecting on God. Yet, there is a connection between both. Just check how you are praying and you will soon discover who or what God means to you. The image of God and the religious practice are interrelated. No wonder, since prayer is the awaking of the consciousness of our relation to God.

Every prayer, even the most secularised one, is addressed to God. As J. A. T. Robinson puts it: 'To pray for

1. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, Meridian, Ny, 1960, p, 15.

another is to expose both oneself and him to the common ground of our being; it is to see one's concern for him in the common ground of our being in terms of *ultimate* concern, to let God in 'o the relationship'². Co-humanity is not synonymous with religion. Horizontal connection should acquire 'depth'. We must commend other people wholly and unreservedly to God and leave them in his hands, and transform our anxiety for them into prayers on their behalf', as we read Bonhoeffer's 'Letters from Prison'³. Precisely because of the theological character of the christian prayer, a penetrating reflection upon prayer and cult calls for reflection upon the God-relation.

The process-thinking

The process-thinking excellently lends itself to this theological reflection. The classic objections against the traditional concepts of God's omnipotence and providence, especially in connection with supplication prayer, can more easily be tackled in the process-thinking.

The founder of the new way of thinking, the British scientist and mathematician Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), drew up a coherent metaphysical system which enabled him to scrutinize the whole experimental reality, with special emphasis on the creativity and on the relativity of all events (influence of Darwin, Bergson and Einstein). Because reality is dynamic instead of static, he switched over from the model 'thing' to the model 'subject'; reality is composed of 'events' rather than of 'substances'. The world is a process of becoming, a flux of events. The traditional concept of substance is replaced by that of actual entity. The primacy of the dimension 'time' receives full recognition. To be is to become. Surely to the actual entities correspond the 'eternal objects', but these forms only exist as mere potentialities.

2. J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God*, London, 1963, p. 99

3. D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, London, 1963, p. 177.

Beside the character of temporality there stands the character of relativity: everything is open to everything. The universe is a net work of dynamic relations which mutually influence each other. Process signifies change and interdependence. The relationship is expressed by the notion of 'prehension'. The term 'prehension' points to being grasped, being influenced, catching. Any new event is the consequence of the previous events and of the own choice as well as of the influence of the aims. In that way the combination of novelty and continuity is achieved. Everywhere and on all levels there is spontaneity and order, 'novelty and law'. Here is more novelty and there is more continuity. The world as a whole is like an organism (hence the name 'Philosophy of Organism'). It forms a 'uni-versum', not a 'multi-versum' and neither a 'chaos'. That universum is a creative progress, a lasting creative synthesis. It is not characterized by dualism. Neither materialism nor idealism explains the reality adequately. The strict antithesis mind-matter is eliminated. 'Mind and matter, organic cells and inorganic molecules, indeed *everything* on this planet, is ultimately composed of the same elementary particles, in an almost infinite variety of combinations'⁴.

According to Whitehead 'God is not to be treated as an exception to all metaphysical principles. He is their chief exemplification'. The God of the 'process-thinking' is no static and unmoved Supreme Being at all. He is least of all unmoved first mover (Aristotle). Changing is neither inferior nor alien to him. God's structure of being reflects that of the universe. God is the highest creativity and the highest relativity. He is the deepest ground of novelty and of continuity as well: hence his bipolar structure. Whitehead distinguishes a primordial nature and a consequent nature in God (Hartshorne prefers to speak of two aspects or dimensions). God's primordial nature, the ground of order and law, is the realm of the eternal objects. It is

4. P. Hamilton, *The Living God and the Modern World*, Philadelphia-Boston, 1967, p. 55.

abstract but not unreal. As consequent nature, God enters into an uninterrupted relation with the ever changing world and with the varying history of concrete men. Whitehead writes: 'The consequent nature of God is conscious, and it is the realization of the actual world in the unity of his nature, and through the transformation of his wisdom. The primordial nature is conceptual, the consequent nature is the weaving of God's physical feeling upon his primordial concepts'⁵.

God is changing in his solidarity with the universe. He is a social God, who is 'prehending' all what concerns and affects the world. He is the basis of novelty and creativity. However, God is not creativity itself, nor does he dominate the evolution, lest man should be free only in appearance. God and the changing world are distinct, however much connected. God does not deprive us of our freedom; yet he does not abandon us. 'Love neither rules, nor is it unmoved', said Whitehead. God does not create the world, he saves it; or, more accurately, he is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty, and goodness'⁶.

God and the world

God strongly 'prehends' what happens in the world. His consequent nature is uncommonly open to impressions from the world. This influence is not purely passive, but it has an utmost active reverse side: God's appreciating, saving and healing reaction: 'a tender care that nothing be lost'. If God is influenced by the world, the contrary is true also, because the relation of dependence is fully reciprocal. God's influence on the world, has however nothing to do with a despotic power. God is no tyrant whatever. On the contrary, he is ruling the world by virtue of conviction and love.

The reciprocal relation God-world is real from both sides. This statement contrasts with the thomistic view:

5. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, New York, 1969, p. 407.

6. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, 408.

from God's side there is only a logical relation ('relatio rationis'), since a real relation ('relatio realis') implies dependence and subordination. God's absolute sovereignty excludes every change, dependence and imperfection. Relativity is an imperfection thus unworthy of God. But, as opposed to this scholastic view, precisely relations are highly enriching for modern anthropology. Who is the finest man, he who is withdrawing into self-sufficiency or he who is accessible to all the good and the beautiful around himself, who cares for the sufferer's lot, who is prepared to listen to the poor and the oppressed? The painting which is admired is not moved. The art-lover is. Is the moved man worth less than the painted canvas?

No, the God of the 'process-thinking' is least of all to be identified with the unchangeable, unmoved Ruler of certain hellenistic and scholastic make. But is he not moving nearer to the Living God of Israel, the Father of Jesus of Nazareth? Is he not strongly akin to the biblical God of the Covenant? Of course he is the all-transcending power and the all-embracing Love. The relationship God-world is perfectly reciprocal but asymmetrical: 'two-directional, but not symmetrical'. God is everywhere in the world but he does not coincide with it (as in pantheism). He is distinct from the world but not as a spectator from a distance. He is not a 'Dieu horloger' as in Deism. He is indeed more world-bound than the classic theism is teaching. Precisely as immanent, God is transcendent. God is absolute in his relativity. Hence the 'surrelativism' in the so-called 'neo-classic' theism of Ch. Hartshorne. God is immanent in the world and the world is immanent in God. But, 'God keeps the rules and above all the rules of love'⁷. As Hartshorne puts it: 'The radical difference between God and us implies that our influence upon him is slight, while his influence upon us is predominant'.

7. P. Hamilton, *The Living God*, p. 96.

Praying is being grasped

I did not intend to give a full exposition of 'process-thinking'. My aim is only to invite to a quite reflection on prayer on the basis of the 'process-theology'. But to that end some basic intuitions, general ideas and outlines should be sketched. Key-notions as actual entities, prehensions, panentheism, God's bipolar structure etc. have been described in the preceding pages. These preliminary explanations were necessary to show the method of process-theology and to evoke its way of thinking. I have tried to keep these previous explanations as short as possible.

Reflection on prayer cannot by-pass a reflection on God nor a criticism of the traditional images of God. I repeat it: God's image and the notion of prayer are correlative and God is the heart of the process-thinking. Whitehead was a philosopher, not a theologian. But already in his *Science and the Modern World* (1925) he devoted a full chapter to God, and in 1926 he wrote: 'To-day there is but one religious dogma in debate: What do you mean by God?'⁸. In his doctrine of God, further elaborated and corrected by Hartshorne ('the God-intoxicated philosopher'), the emphasis is especially put on God's dynamic character. Everything is becoming, and everything is related to everything, and everything is directed to an organic unity. 'God is not to be treated as an exception to these metaphysical principles. He is their chief exemplification' (Whitehead). But, anyhow, God is no synonym of the universe. He is intimately connected with men, but distinct from them. Isn't it for that reason that, in confidence, they can say 'Thou' to him, they can pray to God and call him 'Father'?

For Shubert Ogden, Hartshorne's disciple, God is the basis for our unshakable confidence. He says that the first function of the term 'God' is to point out the objective Ground in reality itself, of our indestructible confidence in the ultimate value of our existence⁹. To this God,

8. A.N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 66

the christians address themselves in their prayer. Cult and prayer is the expression of unshakable confidence in God, even if it is often put to a test and ripens in pain and tears.

Praying is becoming conscious of one's relation to God and assenting to it thankfully and hopefully. It is the expression of the authentic faith become 'language' in the 'yes, Father' (Rom. 8:15), yet not apart from its social and cosmic relations. Praying is re-interpreting these ties and gladly appreciating them from their deepest ground, their very first origin and their final aim. I agree with J. A. T. Robinson writing: 'Our teaching on prayer must begin not from finding God in the gaps, but from taking the world, history, the diary, seriously as the locus of incarnation. The matter of prayer is supplied by the world. . . And this means seeing the diary *in depth*, preparing in the telephone to meet our God. And that cannot be done by skating across the surface of life; it can only be done by waiting upon the Lord, but waiting upon the Lord like Nehemiah with a trowel in one hand and a sword in the other. And so, as it were, with the engagement pad and the newspaper spread before the Lord'⁹. Praying means interpreting and valorizing our daily meetings, tasks, relations, joys and disillusion, in the light of the Gospel and from our relationship with God.

This relativizing and valorizing of everything 'from God' can very well be clarified within the framework of process-thinking. Between God on the one hand and on the other hand ourselves, our life-context, our history, there is an interaction. God is not remaining neutral nor keeping aloof from our worries and burdens, our joys and successes. He is not indifferent to the suffering and injustice in the world. He does not undergo it just passively. I like to quote the striking passage from the last page of *Process and Reality*: 'What is done in the world

9. Sh. Ogden, *The Reality of God and Other Essays*, London, 1965 p. 37.

10. J.A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God*, p. 101

is transformed into a reality in heaven, and the reality in heaven passes back into the world. By reason of this reciprocal relation, the love in the world passes into the love in heaven, and floods back again into the world. In this sense, God is the great companion - the fellow-sufferer who understands'¹¹. Facing the unavoidable suffering, God is standing on our side of the barrier. He does not solve the problems for us: He is no stop-gap, no 'deus-ex-machina'. He takes our tasks and problems seriously. On the other hand, facing our worries and burdens he is infinitely sensitive and ideally responsive. He stands on our side. But do we stand on his side?

Within the process-thinking prayer can be seen as a way of prehending God. In his fine study *The Living God and the Modern World* Peter N. Hamilton writes: 'God and our problems deeply affect each other. In *prehending* God we *prehend* him whose *consequent nature* is affected by our problems, whilst his *primordial nature* is ever supplying just that *initial conceptual aim* which could lead to their best solution. Belief in prayer is belief that problems are often best solved tangentially via God, rather than directly: thus we *prehend* God in the context of the problem before we tackle the problem head on'.¹²

Praying means addressing oneself to God from a concrete life-context, with the question 'What shall I do, Lord?' (Acts 22:10); 'Speak, Lord, thy servant hears thee' (1 Sam. 3:9). Praying is turning to God's wave length' letting oneself be inspired by the Spirit. 'Only the Spirit of God knows what God is. This is the Spirit that we have received from God, and not the spirit of the world, so that we may know all that God of his own grace has given us' (1 Cor. 2:12). Praying is consciously and freely 'prehending' God, is letting sharpen one's sensitiveness for what God is offering us, as ideal, is letting oneself be tempted by God's lure. In brief, prayer is a conscious

11. A. N. Whitehead, *Process and Reality*, p. 413

12. P. Hamilton, *The Living God*, p. 244

and wilful way of prehending God, it is a question of divine feeling, also in the technical sense given to this term in the process-philosophy, namely, of a positive prehension. Praying is turning oneself to God's lure so that the sympathetic dependence is growing. Thereby our own creativity and freedom also grow, for our own relation to God does not depress nor paralyse us but, on the contrary, enhances our creative possibilities. As Hartshorne put it, 'we are not only co-creators with God of our world; we are also co-creators with God of Himself'. God and man are free beings, no competitors in the sense of rivals, but allies and companion. 'God is the great Companion'. The reciprocal relation of dependence is inferior for neither of them, neither for God nor for man. Is this not God's greatest freedom, the freedom to stimulate man's freedom and to respect it at the same time? Isn't it His strongest power to let his love be inviting?

Praying is changing

In his *Religion in the Making* Whitehead writes: 'Religion can be, and has been, the main instrument for progress'¹³. To be a christian is becoming a christian. Surely, to be is a lasting growing process. To believe is to become more believing. In this growing-process the prayer constitutes a very important factor, on condition that it is a dynamic act of believing instead of a sterile formula. Genuine prayer is a real conversion, change of mentality, a 'metanoia' with repercussion on the 'ethos'. A sort of Jacob's fight with the angel, 'a fight with God wherein one is triumphing by the victory of God' (S. Kierkegaard). A 'prehension' of the Holy Spirit, that means by the renovating and re-creating power of God (cf. Novelty and creativity). Praying is consciously and wilfully becoming the allies of 'the great companion, the fellow-sufferer'.

Praying is changing. Not trying to change God, to bring

13. A. N. Whitehead, *Religion in the Making*, p. 36

Him to better insight and other feelings, so that by His Providence and Almightyness, he changes the course of history according to our caprices and arbitrary desiderata. No Praying is changing oneself. 'Comme mes idées changent quand je les prie', says Bernanos' Curé de Campagne. The authentic prayer is not a means of blackmail or a flight from one's own responsibilities. No magic. No stop-gap. On the contrary, it is a widening of consciousness, a sharpening of the awareness of our responsibility, a participation in God's 'all-encompassivity'. God's foreknowledge and providence are misleading terms. The meaning they get within the process-thinking may remove the ambiguity. God knows the future only as a future-possibility.

According to his consequent nature, God learns the actual news. His almighty is no compelling magical power crippling any other freedom. He governs with the strength of the conviction and the allurements of love. He is the poet of the world, with tender patience leading it by his vision of truth, beauty and goodness¹⁴. As P. Hamilton writes, 'all process thinking about God's activity and power is in line with the conviction, derived by Whitehead from Plato, that the divine element in the world is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not as a coercive agency'¹⁵

Against evil in the world God stands on our side. He is so vulnerable, so sensitive, so compassionate. 'The man who cannot suffer is unable to love' says J. Moltmann. God is our fellow-sufferer: He is Love. The prayer for deliverance is just not an appeal to God's miracle-power for deliverance from evil, but rather an appeal for insight and strength for personal growth in spite of evil and of the danger of alienation.

The relation God-man is perfectly reciprocal. God and man are each other's partners, even in front of evil,

14. A. N. Whitehead, *process and Reality*, p. 408.

15. P. Hamilton, *The Living God*, p. 105

suffering and distress. Whereas Bonhoeffer is talking about the suffering and helpless God and Moltmann about the crucified God, Whitehead is speaking of 'the great companion - the fellow sufferer who understands'. Praying is taking refuge with the great Ally, prehending his driving and creating power in order to take up our responsibility and to confirm our freedom. Hereby a christian feels himself gripped by the awaking example of Jesus, he prehends Jesus. Praying is explicitly wanting to participate in God's generous patience and his tender care that the highest possible be realised and that nothing valuable be lost. Therefore no excuse for evil but equally no getting away from it. This does not mean that the absurd be declared meaningful, but it signifies behaving meaningfully even in a meaningless situation.

Praying is changing, is becoming freer, is becoming more oneself from within the consciously experienced and freely accepted relation to God. Here Jesus' example is prominent and indicative: his Hymn of Jubilation (Mt 11: 25-27) and his high-priestly prayer (John 17) and his Gethsemane cry (Mt 26: 37) as well. Praying he becomes conscious of his divine sonship and of his mission to men. The relation to God and the relation to fellow-men are inextricably related.

Growing nearer to each other

Praying is gratefully, hopefully and lovingly thinking about one's relation to God in the light of Jesus' message and example. It is a conscious and wilful 'prehension' of God on the pattern of Jesus, who put himself unconditionally and entirely under God's influence. Praying is trying to see who Jesus was (Lk 19:3); a longing for the highest Relativity, the most fruitful Creativity, the great Companion. Knowing God in his own primary origin and perceiving his final future, be it only gripping and seeking. Does this not happen in genuine prayer? I learn who He is by the change which happens to me when I speak to Him', says the French philosopher M. Nedoncelle.

Indeed we are changing while praying because our horizon is widening to God's unlimited space. Consequently our awareness of solidarity with God 'the great companion' is growing. But simultaneously we become more intensely aware of our social and cosmic ties. Solidarity with all God's allies, with all our companions: is there in this respect a conceivably more rewarding instrument than the 'philosophy of organism' in order to reflect upon it? Everything is connected with everything else; all things are in God and God is in everything. Praying is expressing one's longing for the growth of this connection for the perfect unity in which anyone's freedom can be fully developed. 'If one organ suffers, they all suffer together. If one flourishes, they all rejoice together' (1 Cor. 12:26). Our prayer is the expression of that solidarity. Christian prayer is the echo of Jesus' prayer: 'may they all be one' (John, 17:21).

Statement of the Indian Theological Association

at its 7th annual meeting
on 21-23 October, 1983
at St. Charles' Seminary, Nagpur

1. Context of our reflection

An awakening has been taking place in the Indian Church regarding its special Christian responsibility towards the entire country, in the re-enacting of the message of the gospel. This is particularly felt in the context of the growing contradictions in the post-independence life of our nation and the burning problems of the common people: poverty, hunger, economical and political exploitation and social inequality. In response to this situation there is a growing awareness in the Church of the need for a deeper involvement in all aspects of the life of the people, and consequently of new approaches to the reality of faith and ecclesial self-understanding. We cannot, however, say that this new involvement and these new approaches are welcomed and fully accepted by every section of the Church.

We are reminded of certain recent episodes like the experiences of Fr. Thomas Kocherry at Trivandrum, Fr. Pradeep Prabhu (Peter de Mello) at Talassari, Fr. Jacob of Belgaum in the state of Karnataka and Fr. Abraham Koothottil at Alwaye — all these look like question marks to this emergent ecclesial sense. Without claiming to know all the concrete circumstances and particulars nor making any judgement about the merits of the individual cases, we have to say that the procedure followed when dealing with such cases must take into account the individual's personal dignity and his inalienable rights and must be subject to the due processes of justice. People generally have a right to be informed about decisions taken in such public causes which have a bearing on their life. Equally

important is the need for information to be made available on the importance and degree of our involvement in the burning issues of the day including peoples' movements for justice and liberation from oppressive structures and restrictive regulations. This calls for a critical examination of the role of the Church in our country, her internal organisation, the processes of decision-making and her task of evangelisation against the background of the ecclesial presence in our nation.

2. Responsibility of theologians

We, the members of the Indian Theological Association, gathered for the 7th Annual Meeting, at Nagpur, the geographical centre of India, from October 21st to 23rd, 1983, are deeply concerned about these issues. As theologians we consider it our task to render to the Church in India a service of discernment and interpretation. We have come together to search for an authentic ecclesiology for India and we know that we are only setting the first steps on this difficult but adventurous road. We are conscious that this ecclesiology take proper shape only from constant dialogue with adherents of secular movements, believers of other religions and disciples of Christ: lay, religious and Church leaders. From this firm belief in the power of dialogue we share with you our findings and recommendations.

3. Failure of theology and theologians to face reality

A great responsibility for the modern situation should be attributed to our own failure as theologians, to make our faith reflection respond to the actualities of the Indian context. Stereotype formulas and clichés are often used to shirk the responsibility of facing the facts and confronting the powers that be. The practice of servile conformity to traditional interpretations, often outdated and unrelated to our times and sometimes prompted by the fear of incurring the displeasure of the Church establishment and the danger of losing our position and privileges, is less than edifying. Silence, worse still agreement, when the more

courageous course should be honest disagreement, perpetuates injustice and promotes authoritarian practices.

4. Radically new situation

In the recent past the community of Jesus' disciples has been confronted with a situation, so radically different from anything it experienced before that a mere adaptation or reform of traditional ecclesiology is likely to prove ineffective. Nothing less than a radical transformation is necessary. Our service to the people and our loyalty to Jesus Christ obliges us to reflect and theologise courageously. The present-day 'crisis' which we recognise, has some of the characteristics of the struggle of the infant Church, predominantly Jewish, even Judaistic, when it discovered that the Spirit was also at work among the Gentiles. Were they expected to become Jews in order to become Jesus' disciples? Should Indians become Romans or Syrians in dress, customs, government, worship and thought, in order to become Jesus' disciples? How far should the church's past, however rich and multicoloured, determine its present and its future? To what extent should the past, if at all, serve as a paradigm for the future? Do the early Church and its early traditions carry too much weight in our theological reflections in India? Do we have to look — while being guided and inspired by the past — beyond earlier solutions to meet the radically new situation in India and in the world at large?

I. SOME CAUSES OF THE PRESENT IMPASSE

A. Complex Situation

5. Dichotomy between people and hierarchy

Among the major causes of the present malaise in the church is the fact that people as a whole have not fully experienced the demands of God's call to work for His kingdom and to respond to the responsibilities that flow from his grace. People usually identify the church with the hierarchy and its institutions, which tend to monopolize all initiative and responsibility in the church. Liturgical celebrations are still dominated by bishops and priests. Even the finances and various aspects of adminis-

tration are mostly controlled by them. Women, to a greater extent than men, are denied a significantly active role in the life of the church. This reduces the role of the laity as a whole to one of passivity and total dependence. A living *organism* creates institutions only as a means for attaining its goals and produces enduring expressions of service in the form of organisations; the church in India, on the other hand, appears as an *organisation* planted on the Indian soil from the outside over-burdened with institutions, often exclusively serving those in power; its source of originality, creativity and life itself is located far away, controlled by invisible hands. To give a single example, even for translations of liturgical texts in the vernacular a local church has to depend upon the approval of Rome. This is done inspite of the fact that texts are prepared by competent people of the local church: verification of the fidelity of the translations is done by Rome who depends in turn on translations into European languages.

6. Lack of liberating leadership

Tied to the past by its tradition the Church often fails to read the signs of the times. Thus it fails to give effective and timely leadership to the people to respond to emerging issues in the light of faith. And though the autonomy of the sciences are recognised in principle, the ecclesiastical authorities do not seem to encourage or provide scope for professional people to make their appropriate contribution. A pertinent question may be raised here: how many competent professionals make their effective contribution to the CBCI Commissions that cover mostly secular areas like labour, family mass media, peace and social justice? Instead of being encouraged to think, to feel and act as adults in the Church, people are often reduced to the status of children, by their being denied participation in decision-making. This failure to provide creative leadership and liberate people from infantile dependence upon the Church authorities causes a feeling of alienation from the Church itself.

7. Compartments and labels

There is rigid practice of fixing labels to groups, sections and officers within the Indian ecclesial community in terms of rights and privileges, claims and titles. This happens not only on the vertical plane of higher and lower echelons, but also on the horizontal level of groups, classes, regions and traditions, with often a lack of dialogue and communication among them. Thus there are invisible walls among different sections and classes within the Church: bishops, priests, religious and laity, men and women, Latins and Syrians and the like. People are set against one another in the scandalous name of nobility of origin, caste, position and possessions. This anomaly is a betrayal of the very reality of the people of God who are all equally children of the same Father.

8. Imposition of particular ecclesiologies

Among the main reasons for rigidity in attitudes and approaches in Church relations, and the lack of awareness of the needs and concerns of the people at large, are particular ecclesiologies formed and conditioned by particular socio-cultural situations and fortified and reinforced by vested interests. Thus the Roman political and legal system to a great extent dictated the Roman ecclesiology, and in Palestine the Palestinian background defined the structures of the Church. Often the particular self-understanding of the church, created by local conditions, is simply taken for granted and not critically examined. In the light of the Gospel the relativity of all structures becomes clear and what emerges is the primacy of the communication of life, freedom and salvation to all. Hence all ecclesiologies are relative. This is particularly significant for our Indian situation where ecclesiologies were to a great extent borrowed from abroad. The time has come for us to develop our own ecclesial self-understanding.

9. Lack of awareness of the role of world religions

There is a general ignorance of the early origins of the church which received a great deal from other reli-

gions, particularly Judaism and the Graeco-Roman traditions. It was open to all values that were good and healthy in various peoples and cultures. It is paradoxical that in India which is a land of religions, we Christians remain often unaware of, and insensitive to, the modern movements in these religions and our common cultural heritage with them; these influences have salutary lessons for our own total renewal. Turning our back on their rich religious heritage is closing our eyes and ears to God, who discloses himself to us through them; this narrows our own concept of divine revelation. The contradictions in our ambiguous attitude to other religions are quite obvious. We are told that the non-Biblical scriptures contain much that is noble and good and yet we are not allowed to read them publicly in the liturgy. The church willingly took over and perpetuated the structures and titles of imperial Rome and medieval feudalism, but it is unwilling to appreciate and incarnate the living communitarian leadership of Hinduism and other humanitarian religions. The Indian religious tradition assigns priority to spiritual values; we, on the other hand, often extol structures and organisations, dogmas and laws.

B. Stifling Structures

10. Worldliness in the Church: Failure of mission to the world

A great part of the responsibility for our problems should be placed on those in authority who guide the destinies of the ecclesial community. In over emphasising the institutional reality of the church, they have often endeavoured to bolster it up through the power of material resources, and in their indecent quest for security, they have given the impression of a worldliness that seems to compete with multinational corporations. This puts the credibility of the church at a grave disadvantage and contrasts starkly with its avowed mission to transform the world into God's kingdom.

In spite of their manifest profession to a radical living of the Gospel, the religious seem to have yielded to the temptations of the secular world and its values by not

siding more visibly with the poor. Serving those in power, concentrating on profit-making and quality-education, and thus catering mainly to the higher classes, have made them instruments that promote the values of the dominant classes, to the detriment of the poor who, among other things, need primary education.

11. Authority as power

In this worldly orientation, the Church authority often uses its power to acquire further worldly goods, to ensure our status and to enhance our prestige and privileges. Thus people are manipulated for our own advantage. This naturally leads to a power struggle among the various sections of the community accentuating further the sense of alienation already felt by the powerless sections in the Church.

12. Uniformity mistaken for unity

In this distortion of authority with its dependence on mere external power, there is a great temptation to replace the inner unifying force of the "Word" and the inspiring activity of the Holy Spirit, with a semblance of pseudo-unity created through uniformity imposed from the outside. This imposed — as opposed to natural — unity crushes originality and creativity; it stifles initiative for active participation from the members, vital to a living church. For example, the liturgy which ought to be the celebration of the mystery of Christ through cultural forms of the people, is completely controlled from the outside in the name of unity, which in reality is only superficial uniformity.

13. Proclamation of freedom - institutional control

There is a certain ambiguity and some duplicity even in the life of the church. It proclaims freedom for all: yet it imposes arbitrary control at all levels of ministry and decision-making. This is done on grounds totally unrelated to the Gospel, largely for safeguarding vested interests, rights and privileges, for example, persons are ostracized even for apparently in-

novate ideas; those in authority often pass judgement on them without proper dialogue with those concerned and without consulting other experts.

14. Present ecclesiology a hindrance to authentic evangelisation

There is no doubt that the present set-up of ecclesiastical authority, which puts a premium on the maintenance of the status quo, is greatly unsuited to the effective proclamation of the Word of God and the evangelisation of peoples. The Gospel creates a movement that passes from people to people. On the instant this movement is reified into an establishment, primarily concerned with its own maintenance and security, the dynamism of evangelisation which calls us to follow the free movement of the Spirit of God, is curtailed.

15. Ideological baggage

The transforming force of the Gospel is being weakened by interpretations of the Gospel favouring the status quo. The Hierarchy, in the exercise of its magisterial function, is often conditioned by a narrowly understood interpretation of Christian tradition. For example, involvement in the struggle of the peoples is branded as political action, incompatible with the sacred image and role of the priest. Over and beyond preserving the purity of faith and its vigour, the magisterium becomes the custodian of ideologies and formulations that limit, and sometimes even distort, the reality of faith.

C. Resulting situation in the Church

16. Curtailment of charisms by law

The Church should be a community guided by the Spirit of God through the charisms that contribute to the service of the people. When the guidance of the Holy Spirit is ignored and his gifts are controlled for the sake of external convenience and the upholding of the status quo, the Church is impoverished and its vitality stifled. Often opportunism becomes the guiding rule of the people of God and not the stirrings of the Spirit.

17. Burden of the past

Offering the past as a paradigm for the future easily prevents people from creatively responding to the challenges that shape their destiny. The past, however, has to make its contribution, but should not become a dead weight on the life and activity of the Church.

18. Narrow understanding of Catholicity

When the catholicity of the church is interpreted as the right to conquer and expand in space, little room is left to recognise and accept the manifold richness of the Spirit working among the peoples and in their history. True catholicity would consist in embracing all that is good and noble in human life as an expression and manifestation of the universality of God's plan and his Spirit. The Church however is still far away from this true catholicity, pre-occupied as it is with its inherited identity.

II. TOWARDS A SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM

19. Methodology

Reflecting on the methodology for resolving the problems of the church today, we arrived at the following elements that should be operative in a new ecclesiology.

(1) *Faith experience*: the experience of the risen Lord and his Spirit forms the core of the Christian faith. A similar saving experience of the Spirit is also to be recognised in the people of other faiths.

20. (2) *The Human Reality*: The Liberating and recreating power of the risen Lord impels us to the restructuring and reshaping of the fragmented humanity that characterises our Indian situation, wherein the Kingdom has to become a reality. The church for her part has to exercise her prophetic role "to uproot and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant" (Jer. 1:10).

21. (3) *The People of God*: The community of the disciples gathered by and in the risen Lord is the church; where there is no difference between Greek and Jew, master and slave, male and female, as all are one in the

Lord. Hence the rights and responsibilities of all people, in contributing to the building up of the new human community, should be emphasised both within and without. The right place of the laity, and women in particular, should be recognised. This will take place when the minister recognises in praxis that his primary role is service of the people.

22. (4) *Participation*: (i) *within*: participation in decision-making becomes a corporate responsibility. Those in power in the present situation have to recognise it and accept the collegial bodies from synod to parish council and other agencies, not as merely consultative, but as channels of participation in decision-making. Women should be members of all these bodies. (ii) *Without*: Christians as members of the larger community should participate and collaborate with it in the urgent task of building up a just and human social order and discover in this concrete context the implications of their faith.

23. (5) *Ministers*: Such an understanding of the full community calls for a reconsideration of the present ministerial structure: participation in the selection of candidates for the ministry, accountability to the people regarding the exercise and duration of ministries.

24. (6) The prophetic ministry of the Indian church calls for an *appropriate formation* of the religious and clergy. Normally certain virtues (obedience, conformity, submission, patience in suffering etc.) are recognised as virtues becoming a good seminarian or religious. Certain other virtues (protest, resistance, critical stand, spirit of questioning, discernment etc.) are looked down upon as unbecoming a good religious or seminarian. Both groups of virtues have sanctions and rewards. There seems to be a trend for the ideological domestication of our trainees to be subservient. While not denying the first group of values, we feel that the manifold challenges of the Church in India today call for a special emphasis on the second

group of values. We are particularly happy that in different parts of the country individuals and groups are emerging who are no longer afraid of taking a prophetic stand on the burning social issues of today.

25. Identity of the Indian Church

It has to be conceived as the mystery incarnate in the particular conditions of the local community, gathered around the celebration of the Eucharist. It is also found in the dynamism of the believing group which not only prays together and suffers together but also fights together against evils of all kinds. A church that identifies itself with the joys and sorrows, struggles and endeavours of a human community is liable to become conscious of the condition of being dominated. When it begins to say 'no' to what impedes its liberation, a genuinely dynamic church is born. The Qahal (covenant community) of the Old Testament came into existence when the slaves in Egypt started their struggle for freedom under the leadership of Yahweh. Involvement in people's struggles will help the Church to realise its identity more authentically and transform its own structures in a healthy renewal of itself.

26. Worship in action

Participation in peoples' action for their liberation, with firm belief in God's presence in their midst and trust in his assistance, is also an integral dimension of the liturgy. Worship is, therefore, celebrated not only in rituals and sacraments, but also in the day-to-day work and struggles to attain fulness and to transform the human community into the household of God. In this perspective baptism becomes the commitment to a God who commits himself to his people and their struggle, and Eucharist becomes a celebration of this struggle and their victory (Is 41:11-17; Amos 5:21-24).

27. Church as communion

The true identity of the church is to be the leaven in the mass. If Hinduism and other religions have survived

without structures of authority, it is an indication that the church in India could fulfil its mission with the minimum of structures. It is a communion of persons and a communion of local visible communities following Jesus the liberator.

28. Contemplation and action of the Spirit

In conformity with the manifold Christian and Indian traditions the basis of the community is the Spirit of the Risen Lord. Contemplation and renunciation make the transforming power of the Spirit operative in the life and mission of the Church. Over-reliance on material wealth especially flowing from centres of power and influence, closes any person or community to the working of the Spirit. The church in India can ill-afford to ignore the preference of the Spirit who raises up the *anavim* of all ages and cultures.

29. Scripture, Tradition and the Church

The life of the believing community is nourished and strengthened by its Scriptures and living traditions. Their interpretation today has to be articulated through the constant reference, not only to past traditions, but also to the two-fold contemporary realities, viz. the Spirit manifesting himself through the events of the times and the riches of the living religious traditions.

30. Church and evangelisation

Those who have a deep personal encounter with the risen Lord cannot but share this experience with others. The Lord invites us to work with them for the effective establishment of the Kingdom. This implies participation in the struggle of the people, who are oppressed and marginalised.

31. Church in dialogue with other religions

In this land of religions the Church can fulfil its mission only in dialogue with Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism and other religions. It has to learn from the religious past

of India, its integral humanism which always expressed a strong faith in Man and his inborn sense of freedom, that enabled him to struggle against heavy odds even the law of karma. India always tried to integrate into a single perspective the human goals of wealth, pleasure, righteousness and liberation. This wholistic approach that transcended the dichotomies between the secular and the sacred, spirit and matter, concerns of this world and of the next, urges the Church to overcome her tendency to polarise. Recognising the religions as integral to the one divine economy of human salvation' the Church has to formulate its faith in openness to the concerns and aspirations of other religions for humanity, rather than in opposition to them. To be truly Catholic the Church should acknowledge the insights of other religions as dimensions of its own faith. This positive encounter with other religions can help the Church modify its own traditional selfunderstanding.

32. Conclusion

Our reflections have made us aware that the Church in India is facing today one of the most critical moments of the twenty centuries of its history. We humbly acknowledge that the solutions we have before us are far from being adequate to meet the enormous problems we are facing. The reflections noted here are but the beginnings in our search for an Indian ecclesiology.

The traditional structures and institutions, that gave the Church a certain stability and strength in the past have become today its problems. Since its structures are not absolute but relative to its mission, we must have the courage to discard the clearly irrelevant and even harmful, and look for the contextual and functional.

The ecclesiological concepts and traditions that provided a certain universal uniformity to the Church in the past, are seen today to be socio-culturally conditioned by the times and places in which they were formed. This

situation demands that without denying our past heritage we work towards a truly Indian ecclesiology emerging from the ethos and struggles of our people.

3. Conclusion

Our reflections have shown that the Church in India is facing today one of the most critical moments in its history. We must choose between the way of the cross and the way of the sword. We are called to meet the challenges of the present and to bring about a new synthesis of the Christian faith and the Indian ethos. The reflections have shown that the Church in India is facing today one of the most critical moments in its history. We must choose between the way of the cross and the way of the sword. We are called to meet the challenges of the present and to bring about a new synthesis of the Christian faith and the Indian ethos.

The traditional structures and institutions of the Church in India are facing a crisis of relevance. The Church must find a way to become a truly Indian Church, one that is rooted in the Indian ethos and the Indian struggle for liberation. The Church must find a way to become a truly Indian Church, one that is rooted in the Indian ethos and the Indian struggle for liberation. The Church must find a way to become a truly Indian Church, one that is rooted in the Indian ethos and the Indian struggle for liberation.

The ecclesiological challenge and response that provided a certain spiritual authority to the Church in the past is no longer valid today. It is no longer valid today. The Church must find a way to become a truly Indian Church, one that is rooted in the Indian ethos and the Indian struggle for liberation. The Church must find a way to become a truly Indian Church, one that is rooted in the Indian ethos and the Indian struggle for liberation.